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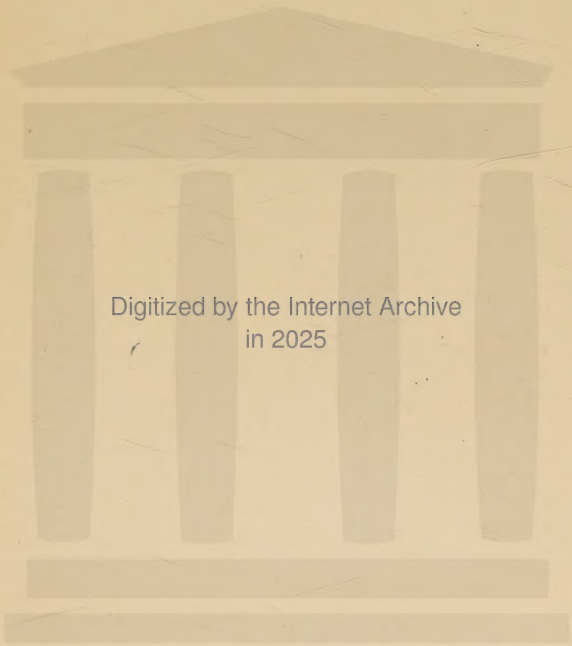

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SIGNS OF THESE TIMES

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THE AYER LECTURES OF THE
COLGATE-ROCHESTER DIVINITY SCHOOL
FOR 1929

By

WILLARD L. SPERRY

DEAN OF THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
1929

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FIRST EDITION

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THE AYER LECTURES

OF THE

COLGATE–ROCHESTER DIVINITY SCHOOL
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

THE Ayer Lectureship was founded in May, 1928, in the Rochester Theological Seminary, by the gift of twenty-five thousand dollars from Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred W. Fry, of Camden, New Jersey, to perpetuate the memory of Mrs. Fry's father, the late Mr. Francis Wayland Ayer. At the time of his death Mr. Ayer was president of the corporation which maintained the Rochester Theological Seminary.

Shortly after the establishment of the Lectureship the Rochester Theological Seminary and the Colgate Theological Seminary were united under the name of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. It is under the auspices of this institution that the Ayer Lectures are given.

Under the terms of the Foundation the lec-

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tures are to fall within the broad field of the history or interpretation of the Christian religion and message. It is the desire of those connected with the establishment and administration of the Lectureship that the lectures shall be religiously constructive and shall help in the building of Christian faith.

Five lectures are to be given each year at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School at Rochester, New York, and these lectures are to be published in book form within one year after the time of their delivery. They will be known as the Ayer Lectures.

The lecturer for the year 1928–1929 was Professor Willard Learoyd Sperry, D. D., Dean of the Theological School in Harvard University.

PREFACE

I AM deeply conscious of the honor and the opportunity which came to me as the first of the lecturers on the Ayer Foundation at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. To stand in a succession of lecturers, on one and another of the foundations such as this, is a privilege. To inaugurate a lectureship is a graver responsibility.

As a professor of practical theology I have a roving commission which pledges me to the consideration of the general concerns of religion. These pages attempt to identify four or five of the moot points in modern American Christianity, where our creeds and our culture come into contact. I have tried to follow the battle to the places where there is a real issue, where too meagre accounts of religion may lay us open to danger.

It should be said that these lectures are addressed particularly to persons who occupy what is vaguely called the "liberal Protestant" position. My hope that these reflections may

be of some interest to such persons is accompanied by the knowledge that certain of the things said here may be turned to account that I do not intend, by persons whom these pages do not primarily contemplate. These chapters plead for a cultivation of the habit of self-correction and so of self-fulfillment in matters of faith and conduct. This principle is commended to all who read this book.

In particular my thanks are due to President Barbour of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and to the committee in charge of the lectures, for their generous hospitality and their admirable arrangements for the delivery of the lectures. I wish also to express my pleasure in having, among the hearers of the opening lectures, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred W. Fry, the donors of the lectureship. I hope that these pages may not be wholly unworthy of the memory of one who was dear to them, and whose voice they have purposed to keep living and vocal in this succession of spoken lectures and printed pages.

WILLARD L. SPERRY.

Cambridge, Massachusetts,
May 10, 1929.

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I

WISDOM

I

WISDOM

COLERIDGE once said of Wordsworth that there was "a something corporeal, a matter-of-factness, a clinging to the palpable in his poetry. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air. It sprang out of the ground like a flower; or unfolded itself from a green spray in which the goldfinch sang."

The genius of Jesus had a double origin. He knew, as at the baptism and the transfiguration, the visitation of a spirit that descended on him through the air; this is the very metaphor that the Gospels use. Much of his most characteristic teaching seems, however, to have matured naturally from a life that was deeply rooted in our common human soil.

The story of Jesus falls in the "new" rather than the "old" part of the Bible. He appears there as a rebel against the con-

ventions, who never reached old age, but died before his time as a martyred heretic. If he did not found the Christian church, a new fact in the world, he was the occasion of its founding. The initial impression is, therefore, that of a young man saying and doing novel things.

No account of the life and work of Jesus could be historically more inaccurate. He was the mature product of a long, unbroken, racial discipline in religion. Apart from the Judaism into which he was born he is almost meaningless. He was not, as Christians too often imply, an innovator. He was rather the appraiser of truths that had been long familiar. He set himself to the hardest of all tasks that a man can undertake, the reanimation of platitudes. Jesus would have been impossible in any "early world" and remains unintelligible if we construe him as part of such a world.

It follows, therefore, that we may not overlook the strain of racial wisdom in his teaching; a corporeal, matter-of-fact clinging to the palpable. The contribution that wisdom made to the religion of the Jew, and which it must

make to any religion, is plain. Wisdom is the substance of our second thoughts about the past and of our long thoughts for the future. Wisdom remakes man into the animal that can wait. Wisdom will never make a man mount up with wings as eagles, or help him to run and not be weary; but it can teach him how to walk and not faint. There are, as all the saints have found, certain stages of the religious journey that can be covered only by the aid of this pedestrian virtue. Wisdom never inaugurates religious movements—that is the mission of prophecy and law—but no religion has any assurance of its survival in history until it has received the appraisal and the sanction of wisdom.

Jesus was confronted on more than one occasion by skeptical hearers who demanded that he invoke a sign from heaven to prove the truth of his words and his right to say them. He made no concessions to that demand. He told men instead to learn to read the signs of the times. The saving salt of this matter-of-fact strain in the teaching of Jesus has prevented Christianity from degenerating into a mysterious secret for the few and has kept

its truths fresh for repeated verification by all sorts and conditions of men in every age.

I have taken as the title for these pages a phrase from the wisdom of Jesus of Nazareth —his words about the "signs of the times."

Of their pertinence to-day there is no possible doubt. We are living in one of those periods of history when lawmaking has been too much elaborated and when prophecy seems to be in temporary abeyance. Ten or fifteen years ago we had dared to hope that we might be on the verge of some general revival of religion. That hope was probably based on ignorance of what wars do to the souls of men; in any case, it has not been fulfilled. We have come upon one of those times when "the word of the Lord is precious and there is no open vision."

At precisely such times men are liable to the old skeptical longing for a sign from heaven to confirm their flagging faith, and apparently at just such times they have to be cured of their skepticism by a discerning attention to patent and accessible truths. One of the conditions of religious growth is a resolute willingness to learn from our own experience. If we cannot read the signs of the

world that is around us how shall we see the sign in heaven?

Jesus, then, counsels men in our circumstance to get wisdom. This suggestion will fall strangely upon our ears, because the wise man has not been hitherto a familiar figure in the American scene. We may say that young countries need lawgivers and prophets, but that a country must wait until it is old for its wise men. Our want of wise men will thus be interpreted as a natural aspect of our national youth. We may go on to say that the zest of discovering and exploiting the resources of a new continent has given little occasion and left less leisure for those long thoughts about the past and the future which are the substance of wisdom. All this is true.

Meanwhile the orthodox American legend of the unlimited resources of our land and the unrestricted opportunities of life here is beginning to wear thin. The days are gone when you went West to find gold; to-day you are advised to take it with you. Modern America may have wakened from the war to find that she is the Crœsus among the nations, but she knows now that she is not a Midas.

The end of the Midas myth is marked by the arrival of the word "conservation." It is being applied to our farm lands and forests, our mines and oil wells, our rivers and our airways. This is a word that belongs to wise men, and its currency marks their advent in our culture.

The mental temper revealed by this word must communicate itself from the ponderables of our national wealth to its imponderables. Hereafter we shall be wiser than has been our wont, when we think of health, education, the ordering of our mental and moral life. Accepting the fact that the control of our industries and business, our education, and—let us hope—our statecraft, has passed into the hands of wise men, I am here proposing its application to our religious life. For our religion will more and more part company with the soberer thinking of the country unless it also gets wisdom.

We visit neither praise nor blame upon the religion of America when we say that hitherto, whatever its obvious excellence, it has lacked wisdom. We have had our full, fair share of lawmakers and prophets, but we have wanted

wise men; indeed, we have been impatient of the wise man. In this respect the religion of America has been true to our whole history and culture. But, when we use these years of sober second thought to stand back from the picture, we must concede that much of the perspective is bad. The sharp eye of the pioneer has been perpetuated in us as a chronic near-sightedness in religion.

Two factors have contributed to the characteristic American short views of religion. The first is the political. The Constitution of the United States guarantees to every citizen the right to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience. That right is restricted only if the resultant worship imperils the State or is an offense against common decency.

Our vaunted religious liberties need however to be guarded against a too common misconstruction. They defend merely an equality of religious opportunity; they do not guarantee that all Americans will worship God in spirit and in truth. And if, in the exercise of your liberties, you do worship God, the Constitution offers no assurance that the God whom you worship will bear any necessary relation to

the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe, or that your religion will keep the greatness that the very idea requires.

If the shield of our religious liberties has this bright blank side of equal opportunity, it has also a dark reverse side scrawled over with denominational hieroglyphics which are becoming more and more difficult to decipher. The census of the religions of America makes of us a "spectacle"—to use St. Paul's term—for the rest of Christendom. We are all agreed that these divisions and subdivisions of the seamless robe were the result of an impetuous zeal which lacked wisdom. Wise men would not have suffered the process to go so far, and now wise men must try to remedy its unhappy consequences.

The economic factor has also made for short views of religion. American churches have no state aid; they usually lack endowments and are therefore dependent upon their living members for support. This dependence raises at once the difficult and delicate question of the attitude of a church toward its constituency. If its members are deeply religious persons it is a happy thing for a church that

its whole support is their opportunity. But if these members are only imperfectly religious, if they insist that their church shall sanction their class prejudices, their sectarian tenets, their party politics, their economic dogmas—then this matter of the support of the church becomes highly problematical. A church opposes the status and practices of its members at the risk of its own continued life.

A truly great institution must have a certain aloofness from the persons with whom it is immediately concerned. Such an institution must not take the complexion of its members too closely and cannot take their orders too submissively. The great church must be able to go its way without the suffrage of its constituency and still live. It must always have the right, and must often exercise the duty, of opposing the opinions and preferences of its members, to correct and to admonish; yet at the same time it must remain great souled enough to keep their respect and loyalty at the very moment when it most stirs their natural resentment.

Now American churches have achieved many virtues, chief among them the intimacies

and informalities of their ways. But the necessary identification of the institution with its people, in the terms of the life of a single parish, has cost them this type of greatness, which is patent in most of the historic churches of Christendom.

Apologists for our ways will say that any such idea of institutions is un-American, since our whole political and social philosophy sets in the opposite direction. Our institutions are supposed to be representative; they are simply ourselves organized for certain purposes upon which we have reached a working agreement. Yet, even in such an America, we do impute and must impute to our major institutions a certain detachment from ourselves. In our soberer moments we wish these institutions to save us from ourselves and from the unhappy consequences of the too short views of life to which human nature and circumstance always incline us.

We expect our universities and colleges to be great in this manner. We do not wish them to accommodate their ways to the whims of passing generations of undergraduates. Their major duty is the defence of the high traditions

of scholarship. A college that allowed its undergraduates to determine its academic policies would soon forfeit whatever wisdom it had won from its longer life.

Our higher courts are presided over by men of like passions with ourselves, but we despise a court if it substitutes a consideration of persons for impersonal justice. Nothing undermines our confidence in the courts so swiftly as this suspicion that personal influences are deflecting or defeating an impartial verdict. When we go to college or court, therefore, we wear our democratic rue with a difference.

But with the average American and his church it is otherwise. He does not expect his church to differ from him or to criticize him. If his church opposes him he is resentful. He expects from this institution, which he supports by his free gifts, religious sanction of his private opinions. If that sanction is withheld he takes himself and his membership elsewhere to some church that does approve of him because it agrees with him. For one such move made in the interest of greater consistency of theological doctrine there are two moves made in search of some institution that will not

venture any criticism of our political opinions, economic condition, or business methods. It has been, latterly, professionally quite as dangerous for a Protestant minister to bolt the Republican party as to doubt the dogmas of his church.

The biologist might construe this close adaptation of the church to its constituency as a sign of intense vitality, since life is said to be precisely such adaptation to environment. But many of us fear otherwise. This vital adaptation too often proves, upon examination, to be accommodation—a very different matter. An institution which is too dependent upon its constituency for its support tends to follow the line of least resistance along the ways of opportunism. Theologies of accommodation, with opportunist churches to preach them, are not signs of spiritual life, they are premonitions of spiritual death.

The truth is that in America we spend altogether too much time and effort in simply keeping churches alive. So much energy is directed to this end that the existence of the institution seems to be the object of our religious endeavor. We are familiar with the ecclesiastical valetudinarian whose attention is centred upon

the slight fluctuations in the pulse beat of his attenuated congregation.

Let it be conceded at once that there never was a time in church history when as much inventiveness and as much resourcefulness were available to make churches go, as in our modern America. The departments of church method claim the middle of the stage in theological schools, and the wit of those departments is fortified by the whole ingenuity of our resourceful civilization.

The only difficulty is that, once it has come alive, a man cannot kill the suspicion that running a successful church may not be identical with spreading the Christian religion. The two are not necessarily the same.

The American must learn how to wear his democratic rue with a difference when he goes to church. He must believe that his church serves him best when he requires it to be great, in the ideal and the historical senses of that word. For—

> "Oh! if we draw a circle premature,
> Heedless of far gain,
> Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
> Bad is our bargain."

A church cannot afford to drive this sharp bad bargain for the sake of its daily bread. There are some messes of ecclesiastical pottage, by way of immediate success, which are too dear at any price.

There is abroad in modern America a widespread and intelligent interest in religion, if not a general profession of religion. More persons than ever before know what religion is, how it works in history, and what it requires of men, even though they may be reluctant to make the personal sacrifices that it demands. These persons will not be deceived by the apparent success of the theology of accommodation and the opportunist church. They know that these are bad bargains with the universe.

We, who are personally and professionally concerned for the future of religion, cannot ignore this increasing knowledge about religion. It provides the background before which our words and deeds are judged. Highly sectarian and shrewdly speculative religious transactions will not commend themselves to an age in which men are beginning to take, in all their serious concerns, long views of life.

Therefore, neither free political opportunity nor immediate economic necessity will justify short views of religion. Long views will be more and more necessary, and in the winning of these long views wisdom must help us to look with level eyes at the signs of our own times.

II

ATTITUDES

II

ATTITUDES

WHAT then is this vast concern that we call "religion," before which our words and deeds are set?

Lest we waste time to no purpose, let us go at once to that latest arbiter in these matters, the new Oxford Dictionary. We find there that the word "religion" is of Latin origin but of doubtful etymology. It is probably derived from the verb *religare*, to bind.

In its earliest English usage the word meant membership in one of the orders of the mediæval church. This use still persists among Catholics, who would speak of a Dominican as "a religious," in distinction from the laity and the secular clergy. This meaning lingered on in the vernacular for some centuries, and Horace Walpole, in the Eighteenth Century, could still say of his father that he had "retired into religion," joined a church order.

In modern times, however, this ancient usage has become increasingly restricted and archaic. Religion is now generally construed to mean belief in a divine being, with the conduct consequent upon that belief.

Now the root idea of the word is that of a relationship. We find in the first book of Samuel the noble saying of Abigail to David, "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." That is a moving and adequate account of what is meant by religion. In religion we are bound up with God.

Most of the perplexities that attend the idea of religion concern this other partner to the relation. To what or to whom are we bound in religion?

We are true to the generic account of religion if we say that the divine is that whole bundle of life of which we are a conscious part. The spirit of God is in us but is not exhausted by us. The divine is also something not-ourselves that is the object of our trust, faith, fear, and love. God, as the circumference drawn around this conscious experience of belonging, conditions the more restricted relation-

ships of life, which fall as lesser circles within the greater circle of our religion.

If we can conceive of anything in the universe with which we have no possible relation and to which we cannot belong, then we must say that this marginal alien somewhat is no part of the divine. If in religion we belong to anything less than the All, then the mystery beyond the pale of belonging has no place in our religion and is not our God.

The conviction that we belong to God may range from indiscriminate devotion to many gods, through fanatical loyalty to one god from among the many, to the worship and service of the only God. Unless we are to reserve the word "religion" for the most mature faiths we must concede to many worshippers of local gods their initial claim to the term. They believe that they belong to a god, and this faith conditions their conduct.

So construed, in this generic sense, the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," is a religious cry. So also are Carlyle's words, "Whence, O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not: only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God to God." The

old berserker battle call of the book of Judges has a religious ring: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." So, too, have Coleridge's lines, "In wonder all philosophy began; in wonder it ends. The first wonder is the child of ignorance; the last is the parent of adoration."

Words such as these raise many hard questions, ethical and speculative, yet they have a common constant religious quality. Man is here conceived as a being who does not live and die to himself. Through all his life he is, in John Masefield's phrase, "companioned still." Something or someone in the outer scheme of things has a stake in him. He belongs to a cause, a principle, a process, a person. Life is not lonely pioneering; it is a constant partnership, since from birth to death a man is bound up in the bundle of life with his God.

Protestants have latterly tended to describe religion as an "attitude." Once again we must be careful to use words scrupulously. In this instance the word "attitude" must not be confused with another word very like it—"pose." Many, if not most, of the religious issues of the present time seem to suggest

the careless identification of these two words.

Both words have to do with what we call our religious positions. Holding a religious position may be the soldierly task of defending some proposition against its critics. But holding a religious position is something more than that; it implies a posture that reveals our very conception of religion.

What then is the difference between an attitude and a pose, both of which terms are used as appropriate accounts of our religious positions? The difference is a simple and plain one; an attitude implies a relation to something not ourselves, a pose is an account of ourselves.

Thus, we should never say of a regiment of soldiers drawn up for review before their commanding officer that they were holding the pose of attention. They are in the attitude of attention, required by the presence of their superior. Likewise we should never say of ourselves that we are in a pose of expectancy, rather that we are in the attitude of expectancy. Something is about to appear or to happen in the outer world, which requires this adaptation of ourselves to its advent.

Our attitudes therefore are postures that

we take with reference to something other than ourselves. It is probably still more exact to say that we never consciously take attitudes. Something exists or happens in the world around, and we adjust ourselves to it by the appropriate attitude, which is taken unconsciously.

A pose on the other hand is inspired in the first instance, and then maintained, solely by our idea of ourselves. We pose to ourselves or before a looking glass. This self-conscious posture may imply some vague idealization of ourselves but is not our direct conformity to any existing outer reality. If we carry our poses into the open we do so that we may persuade other people of the truth of our idea of ourselves and get whatever social confirmation may be had from their consent.

It follows, therefore, that when we are examining what we call a man's religious position, we cannot escape the question, Is this position an attitude or is it a pose? Is it a man's spontaneous and natural adaptation to an outer reality, or is it his ideal account of himself?

As a matter of history every religion came

into being as a human attitude taken in entire good faith. The prophets and lawgivers, who initiated and organized the historic religions, believed there was some divine being in the universe who required of them the positions which they took. Their acts of worship, creeds, and moral codes were therefore genuine attitudes.

With the advance of human knowledge this confidence usually turns out to have been either inaccurate or inadequate. God is not what men thought he was. Whatever he is, he is something more or other than men supposed him to be. The later members of a religion do not believe, therefore, just what the founders believed. Meanwhile they are committed and accustomed by long usage to holding certain positions, and they eventually have to face the question whether they will henceforth perpetuate, as deliberate poses, positions that cannot be honestly construed as attitudes.

A strong initial case may always be made for the perpetuation of the religious pose. In the past many benefits have attended the holding of the positions involved; they gave

men comfort, strength, peace of mind. We do not wish to forfeit these benefits, and we assume that they are not necessarily denied to us. The "problem of prayer" furnishes an excellent example of this dilemma. Many persons doubt whether God hears and answers prayer. They infer that this practice has always been primarily a process of recollection and self-idealization. They offer therefore what they suppose to have been at all times the reliable truth of prayer, its subjective benefits. Some persons, agnostic but still hopeful, suggest that if only we are faithful in maintaining the pose we may recover our lost faith in a God to whom to pray.

The weight of all the vested interests of religion is always on the side of this solution of the matter. So long as the formal position is held, what matter whether it is a pose or an attitude? The inward construction placed upon the position need not be examined too closely. The important thing is to save the conventional position at all costs.

Hence we are familiar to-day with a type of writing and speaking which makes constant use of all the apparatus of traditional Chris-

tian devotion and even of orthodox theology, yet leaves us in the gravest doubt as to whether the speaker or writer is using words in the usual and the accepted sense. We cannot help wondering whether he believes in any divine reality outside the good-will in the conscience of man. He saves the position, yet at the cost of changing it from an attitude into a pose. When you come on the name of God in this connection you do not know what construction you are to place upon it. The name of God, so used, sounds sometimes like the echo of a word that can no longer be plainly spoken, or looks like the ghost of an idea that keeps some sort of spectral life in the mind. Persons who make such use of the word would defend their practice by saying that if men had only known it, religion was a pose from the first, therefore in their latest usage there is no dishonesty or departure from the truth of fact.

This whole endeavor to reinterpret and vindicate religion as the noblest of the human poses is not, however, altogether reassuring. If analogies from common life have any pertinence here, we may doubt how long men can continue to hold, as poses, positions that they

do not believe to be required as attitudes. The example of the poseur is not encouraging, since all poses tend toward break-down from tedium in the vigil before the mirror of self-scrutiny. The poseur has never been one of the world's more heroic figures and has not been preëminently successful as a maker of history.

Religious positions have been made possible and tenable hitherto because of men's faith in them as attitudes. It is not as though it were an easy matter for a man to hold the positions of mind and heart and will required by the great historic religions. Men have maintained them for centuries because they believed them to be valid and even necessary. Once let men suspect that there is no outer reality to require the religious attitude, and the will to hold the perpetuated pose instantly flags.

On the one hand the issue is vastly complicated to-day because we do not know what is implied by an orthodox position. To all outward appearances the orthodox pose is the same as the orthodox attitude. They are line for line identical, and only the man who holds the position can tell you the construction he places upon his position. If he is unwilling or

unable to do this, you do not know what inference is to be drawn from his position.

On the other hand, the issue is quite as complicated because of the natural preference of the world at large for pleasant poses as against strained attitudes. In adjusting our minds, religiously, to changing ideas of nature and history we are thrown into many attitudes that betray the inner agonies of this struggle. They are not, probably, the final or the permanent attitudes at which we may hope to arrive. Meanwhile, no man who is wrestling with what Walter Bagehot calls the most grievous pain in the world, "the pain of a new idea," is an inviting sight.

The genuine attitudes of much honest liberal theology, as of much untheological contemporary religion, are not wholly reassuring. Men say, "If that is religion, we do not want it; much better the tranquil pose of the conventional person. If the divine reality is as stern, exacting, and awful as these attitudes imply, how much better to get what solace is to be had from the more pleasant idealization of ourselves suggested by the benign poses with which we are familiar."

It is at this point that we invoke wisdom to help us make a choice between conventional poses and unconventional attitudes. Wisdom, which is in this connection simply the verdict of the history of religion, will incline us always to prefer any honest attitude of man toward his universe to the most reassuring pose that humanity can strike. If religion is a man's way of belonging to his universe, then there can be no religion where there is nothing for humanity to belong to. Very few of us can say just what we mean or all that we may mean by God. But we know that the religious life is genuine only when it is concerned with this relation that is supposed to exist between man and a God-not-man.

Wherever and whenever, therefore, we find men taking natural and honest attitudes toward a universe of which they believe themselves to be a part, there we have the conviction that underlies all religions. With changes and advances in human knowledge, the new attitudes may be uncouth and ungainly when compared with the conventional theological position; nevertheless, there is this to be said in defence of any genuine human attitude, it is

honest and it is unself-conscious. The man who poses never succeeds in losing himself, and losing yourself is the whole first half of religion. The man who is in an attitude, however unconventional, has lost himself and thus may find himself.

Wisdom therefore counsels a strong predilection for human attitudes in the presence of the universe. If we should all conclude that there is no divine reality in the universe, corresponding in some way to the traditional idea of God; if we should conclude that the mind of man is the sole habitation and scene of the divine and that religion is not only expressed but exhausted by the human will-to-goodness; if we should thus infer that the universe leaves us to our own spiritual devices and has no deeper commerce with us—then this residual human solitude and this necessary self-sufficiency are not what the world has hitherto meant by religion.

Let it be said at once that God is and must be the object of our faith. He cannot be proved or disproved, and there is much honest agnosticism in all real religion. But if our faith ceases to search after him and find him as its

object, if we get back from the mystery only the mocking echo of our own voice, then it would seem better to retire the words "God" and "religion" from the vernacular. The poses which they may serve for a little time cannot be held permanently.

In these matters, where so much is at stake and where it is so necessary that we should understand each other, there is something to be said for trying to keep the wells of English pure and undefiled. The continued use of words which by long association have one meaning, but are now compelled to take on an entirely different meaning merely to perpetuate a tradition, only muddies the waters of plain thinking and speaking.

Wisdom, therefore, has no interest in the perpetuation of religious poses. Wisdom casts our human lot with honest attitudes. Wisdom promises us no exemption from the pain of new ideas of God or from the unconventional attitudes which that pain exacts of us. Wisdom does insist, however, that when we speak of religion we should have in mind what a modern thinker calls, "My neighbor the universe."

III

NONCOÖPERATION

III

NONCOÖPERATION

Some twenty years ago Dean Inge delivered a series of lectures on "The Coöperation of the Church with the Spirit of the Age." The title was a deliberate misnomer, since the lectures defended the duty of noncoöperation. This very pronouncement, indeed, won for Dr. Inge his familiar title of "The Gloomy Dean."

This is his thesis:

"It is not the office of the Church of Christ to be a weathercock, but to witness to the stable eternal background in front of which the figures cross the stage, and to preserve and maintain precisely those elements of the truth which are most in danger of being lost. For this reason it rarely happens that the Church can 'coöperate' with a popular movement; more often it is compelled to protest against its one-sidedness. If we consider at what periods the Church has been most true to itself,

and has conferred the greatest benefits on humanity, we shall find that they have been the times when Churchmen have not been afraid to 'be in the right with two or three.' Like certain ministers of state, the Church has always done well in opposition, and badly in office."

There are few figures in history more interesting and more difficult than the non-coöperator. He is interesting because he is different; he is difficult because he creates impossible situations. We begin by suffering for him what Herbert Spencer once called "vicarious shame," since we think he knows no better. But when we realize that his rudeness is deliberate and not unconscious we become angry with him. We cannot understand why he will not sit at our table and eat our salt as other civil persons do. Who is he to subject the common fare to the highly elective requirements of his too dainty palate or too delicate digestion? Why should he refuse the rations that satisfy his peers, if not his betters?

Perhaps when psychology shall have done its perfect work we may understand this man a little better, and understanding more we

shall forgive much. The incivility of the noncoöperator is probably the result of a repressed childhood. But even if we forgive this man we shall not uniformly approve of him.

Jesus said that his contemporaries were like children playing in the streets. If one half of them wished to play wedding that was enough for the rest to insist on playing funeral. Centuries of oppression seem to have bred in the Jew a fixed habit of political noncoöperation. Jesus implied, however, that this way of meeting the world was costing the Jew much. A temperamental inclination to say "No" to the world's address need not be, of itself, a virtue.

On the other hand, the ability to say "No" may be matured into creative heroism. Every advance that history has known, from the day when Abraham left Haran until now, has had its origins with some noncoöperator. Childish petulance may be sublimated into adventurous nonconformity. The conscientious objector may have had the misfortune to be born a shy child, but when he puts away childish things he becomes one of the most arresting men whom the world knows.

Society has never found any crude rule of thumb to distinguish between the petulant dissenter and the matured nonconformist. Many of its most tragic blunders have followed its failure to make this distinction. Seen in retrospect the world's noncoöperators have proved to be the saviors of society, rather than its enemies. If they opposed the customs of their own time, they did so that society might live, not die. The witness of such noncoöperation to its longer mission in history might be summed up in those words of Joseph to his brethren, "God did send me before you to preserve life."

The individual Christian and the church have few harder questions to settle than this of coöperation or noncoöperation. Shall we throw ourselves into the trend of our time, or shall we stand apart and aloof from the time?

There is no rule of thumb to provide any single answer to this perplexity; each situation must be judged on its own merits. If the concerns of the time are serious and its works promise to be permanent, you run the risk of losing your immortality in history and perhaps your immortal soul as well, if you are always

insisting upon your own peculiar angular individuality. We do not forget the merited rebuke which Henry IV is said to have meted out to a laggard noncoöperator, who arrived when the battle had been won, "Hang yourself, brave Crillon: we fought at Arques, and you were not there!"

But, if the concerns of a time are trivial and ephemeral, you will certainly lose your soul if you throw it away upon the time. Many a well-meaning man looks back with regret upon a long life that has been frittered away in short-lived enthusiasms. The present moment is not necessarily an eternal moment, and a man may be so wholly contemporary as to miss his own eternal life in the midst of time.

"Roused by importunate knocks
I rose, I turned the key, and let them in,
First one, anon another, and at length
In troops they came; for how could I, who once
Had let in one, nor looked him in the face,
Show scruples e'er again? So in they came,
A noisy band of revellers—vain hopes,
Wild fancies, fitful joys; and there they sit
In my heart's holy place, and through the night
Carouse, to leave it when the cold grey dawn
Gleams from the east, to tell me that the time
For watching and for thought bestowed is gone."

In saying that the church cannot coöperate with the time Dean Inge is certainly repeating the ancient but never superfluous warning against worldliness. The church is not concerned to supply the perennial "cakes and ale" that satisfy the animal man.

But the Dean is saying something more than this. His meaning is determined by his whole phrase about "the spirit of the age." By that spirit he means the mind that inhabits and inspires an entire human culture. Its spirit is intimated by the ideas and purposes that are expressed in its stable institutions. We must move on, therefore, from the conventional religious strictures visited upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, to estimate the duty of the religious man toward that strange mingled genius which is the spirit of his own age.

So construed, the spirit of an age can never be wholly irreligious, for many past influences have conspired to produce that spirit, and among these influences religion has always figured. However far this spirit may fall short of the best religion of its time, it always witnesses to some residual religion, which sur-

vives from the past. This residual religion will not be uniformly identified as religion, since it has become, mentally and morally, a people's second nature.

A careful scrutiny of the conventions of any given age will discover the traces of this religion, mainly in certain accepted moral ideas, which represent substantial victories won by religion in other days. We take it for granted to-day that we must care for our sick and poor, our orphans and our destitute aged. A city that lets such needy persons go untended is out of touch with the spirit of this age. We believe that private fortunes are a public trust and that rich men cannot ignore the social sources and the social destiny of their wealth. A selfish millionaire is reprobated by the spirit of the age. We think that any human status bordering on slavery is wrong, therefore an industry that keeps its employees in economic serfdom is not in accord with the age. In such ways the spirit of this age reflects certain convictions that the religion of the past has now vindicated and made common moral property.

Given an age which incarnates these commendable convictions, why should not the

church lend the age its whole-hearted coöperation? The noncoöperator, by his neglect of these principles and his aloof failure to repeat them in season and out, lays himself open to the serious charge of being a less religious person than his fellow citizens who administer the affairs of state. Short views of the work of the church will always suggest full coöperation with the age, and it is not altogether easy to see why the short view is not also the right view. Do long views modify in any way these short views?

Before we decide what our duty in the present is we do well to review the past, to see what precedents and lessons it yields us. Church history vindicates Dean Inge's statement that the church has always done badly in power and well in opposition. The periods of church history that were critical and creative, to which we constantly return with interest and from which we still get inspiration, were the periods when great nonconformists were abroad and when the church, or at least the vital movements within the church, pursued a policy of noncoöperation with the time. The times that we pass over with slight interest

and from which no profit is to be had were the times when the church seems to have contented itself with giving its pious sanctions to the secular business in hand. These eras of uncritical coöperation yielded little that was worth recording and less that has been worth remembering.

Furthermore, the times when the church contented itself by coöperating with the spirit of its own age were the times when the church was invaded, if not by frank worldliness, at least by a subtle secularity. At such times churches melt into the political and economic landscape and become indistinguishable. We cannot see that men would have been worse off in those periods had there been no church. The slightest familiarity with church history will convince us that coöperation with the spirit of the age does not define and exhaust the duty of a church in its own time. On the contrary such coöperation seems to imperil the nature of the church and to affect its character adversely. Plainly there is some principle operative here that is bound up with the relation of religion to culture, and with the work of the church in the world.

That principle appears prophetically, but clearly, in the book of Acts. When the first church council met at Jerusalem the moot matter before the Apostles was the relation of Christianity to the Law. Should the church content itself with reaffirming the Law, or should it address itself to certain religious concerns not wholly covered and realized by the Law? No one denied the basic religiousness of the Law; everyone wished to see the righteousness, intended by the Law, vindicated. Did this mean that the nascent Christian church was to be therefore merely a sect of zealous pietists for coöperation with Judaism?

The Apostle James is credited on that occasion with a very penetrating remark: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every day." The words plainly imply that, so far as the primitive Jewish-Christian communities were concerned, the general spirit of the time could be trusted to care for the just claims of the Law. The church was not to oppose the Law, it was to go on working for the ends of the Law; but the church was to do this by addressing itself to certain aspects of the

religious life that the Law was ignoring. The church was to say what the Law tended to leave unsaid.

This suggestion betrays the working of a racial mind that had become wise. We have here an echo of that law of alternation which is simply stated in the third chapter of Ecclesiastes; there are times and seasons for different things. Whatever else the Wisdom books of the Jews defend, they defend the need of contrast in human experience.

Now this need of contrast, with the law of alternation, which gives it formal statement, is betrayed by the yoked words that religion habitually uses. These yoked words always suggest opposed areas of concern, which religion is forever trying to get included within the one "bundle of life." Their inclusion and reconciliation provide constant difficulty for faith and for conduct. It seems to be hard to persuade these words to live together. But if it is hard to get them to live together, they are clearly less happy when apart.

Such paired words come at once to mind: the human and the divine, the natural and the supernatural, the immanent and the trans-

cendent, the finite and the infinite, time and eternity, earth and heaven. They may be multiplied at will.

Any single pair of these words belong together. If, however, we take them in their entirety, the first members fall together into one group and the second members into another group. It is not easy to find any generic terms which will bracket all the specific contrasts involved, but we are somewhere near the truth of the matter if we say that religion is compounded of this-worldliness and other-worldliness. The valid claims of this world defend what religion gives here and now. The residual other-worldliness hints at all that is not given in present actuality. We can only say that the attempt to live permanently in one of these worlds, to the neglect and exclusion of the other, is fatal to the religious life. Religion perpetually renews itself in the souls of men and in the fortunes of societies by appealing from the emphasis that custom insures to the antithetical concern.

We come thus to a working principle, which may be safely invoked to help us define the nature and work of the church. There are

some permanent and valid concerns of religion that can be deputed to the spirit of the age in which we live. The time itself will preach in every city certain religious ideas that have become part of the accepted culture. There is no need for ecclesiastical approbation of these concerns. The church need not give its sanctions to the witness of the age to its own convictions, and gains no special merit in so doing.

But the workings of the human mind and the dialectic of history are such that no age ever exhausts the account of religion. There is always a neglected or underemphasized truth to be stated and defended. Religious men and religious institutions make their best contribution to the religion of an age, not by reaffirming the accepted platitudes, but by proposing the neglected aspects of the total idea.

The religious consciousness is like a pendulum swinging in an arc between the two extremes of this-worldliness and other-worldliness. We do not know why it swings this arc, even though we have defined the arc and marked the swinging.

There may well be some interior tension in the human soul which keeps the spirit of man in motion between these extremes. Or perhaps the soul is forever seeking relief from the intolerable weight of one of these worlds, intolerable because unintelligible, and unintelligible because, of itself, inadequate. We only know that if religion is to go on the pendulum must not be stopped.

We see, then, why noncoöperators and nonconformists are necessary to the permanent life of religion. Short-sightedness in these matters inclines men to equate the half truth announced by the age as a religious whole truth. The noncoöperators know better, and it is their duty to announce and defend the antithetical half truth neglected by the age.

This longer witness of the past to the perils of a well-meant but uncritical coöperation with the spirit of the age gives us reason to prophesy that the marriage of convenience, which a church arranges with its age, will be without spiritual issue, since such a marriage is consummated within the prohibited limits of consanguinity. To the list of marriages forbidden in the older prayer books we might add

this item: A church shall not marry the mind of its own time.

Historians tell us that the classical world is of supreme interest to us because it is the one period of human history that we can study in something like its entirety. We know its beginning, middle, and ending. That age was not indifferent to religion and indeed achieved religious philosophies of great elevation and distinction. This history yields an interesting object lesson for our present discussion.

The religions of the classical world are peculiarly deficient at one point; although they aimed to eliminate the lie in the soul, they failed to elicit the conscientious objector. They bred many sincere men, they produced few nonconformists. Edward Caird reminds us that, so far as we know, Socrates was the only martyr for truth in this whole tradition. Caird ventures the judgment that the very ease with which these philosophies won their victories was the source of much of their final weakness, since "in spiritual things the greatness of the price we pay has much to do with the value of the good we acquire."

We miss in the history of the religions of

the classical world that conflict with the spirit of the age which we find in the prophetic and reforming periods of the enduring world religions. Either the classical world must have been unusually tolerant—and that may mean unusually indifferent—or else its religious method was imperfect. These thinkers of Greece did not have to resist unto blood; they were not stoned and sawn asunder; they did not live in dens and caves of the earth. There was apparently no recognized principle of dissent, or inclination to antithetical concerns, operative among them.

For the want of this mental second nature the two main streams of the later religion of the classical world, Stoicism and Neoplatonism, tended to develop in isolation. Joining one of these schools was, my classical friends tell me, equivalent to joining a church. But the church one joined was not a holy church universal, it was a sectarian church. And after the manner of sects these churches of old inbred.

They represented the two antithetical concerns of all religion. Stoicism was a noble attempt to vindicate the religion of this-

worldliness. Neoplatonism was a bold endeavor to affirm the religion of other-worldliness. In their latter days, when they divided the religion of classicism between them, each stressed the more zealously the claims of its own position, neither sought the correction of the antithetical idea. Stoicism and Neoplatonism may have been involved in the downfall of the classical world; but they were already dying of inbreeding.

In a different way Greek ethics suffered from the same fault. Its traditional moral ideal was that of moderation in all things. The good man did nothing in excess. He saw the extremes of conduct to which human nature is liable and of which human character is capable, and he shunned these extremes in favor of some median line of conduct, which should deliver him from the excesses on either hand. The result, as someone has said, was neither a saint nor a gentleman, but a prig. It is difficult to imagine a more uninspiring person than Aristotle's large-souled man, who was proposed as the personification of these ethical ideals. The "golden mean" is not only unexciting, it is unnatural.

When we pass over from Greek to Christian thought we are in a different world. Aristotle, it is true, had known what the book of Ecclesiastes knew, that you restore its straightness to a bent stick by bending it too far in the other direction. But the later Greeks had forgotten this, while the Jews had remembered it; this was their wisdom. That wisdom reappears, matured and disciplined, in the mind that gave us the New Testament.

In what is probably the earliest writing of the New Testament, the Epistles to the Thessalonians, this principle is at work. The occasion and the theme of these letters are familiar. The Thessalonian Christians were thinking exclusively about the second coming of Christ. Their preoccupation with this religion of other-worldliness, which they believed was to be vindicated in the near future, was involving them in a neglect of the valid claims of this world to their attention. St. Paul does not deny the validity of this hope; indeed, at that time, he probably shared it. But his letters to them are wisdom correcting the half truths of enthusiasm. He suggests that, while it is true that Christ is soon coming, they should not

fail during their period of waiting to live an orderly life in the world that now is. He tells them that while this world lasts, if a man does not work neither shall he eat, and warns them against eating the bread of idleness. These Thessalonian Epistles are simply a religious corrective for a too exclusive other-worldliness.

This habitual working of the apostle's mind is still more apparent in a later letter, the first of those to the Corinthians. The church at Corinth seems to have been made up of groups of diversified and strong-minded persons. They were in difficulties among themselves over many debated matters of faith and practice. Strong convictions had bred sharp dissensions, and the church was in a fair way to break up into rival sects.

St. Paul does not deny to any of these Christians his cherished dogma, whether of baptism, or idol meat, or gifts, or orders. He does suggest to each dogmatist, however, that he probably has only a half truth, and recommends for consideration in every instance the antithetical half truth, which is being ignored.

This first letter to Corinth, in many ways the most illuminating of all St. Paul's writings,

reveals a wise man thinking about religion. The letter is fair and just, it is ironic often to the point of apparent compromise. Yet the compromise which it suggests is no Greek doctrine of the golden mean, it is a deliberate attempt to arrive at the whole truth, by adding to accepted half truths the neglected complementary half truths, which the very idea of religion requires. The First Epistle to the Corinthians is a measured prohibition of too short views of the Christian life, a brief for long views.

St. Paul is responsible for that familiar phrase about "the mind of Christ." If we interpret these words to indicate on St. Paul's part a mechanical repetition of the thoughts and words of Jesus, they have little warrant. St. Paul himself was not an imitator of anyone, even of Jesus; he was an original religious genius. But if we mean that there was a strain of ineradicable mature wisdom in the mental processes of both, there is much ground for this appeal to the mind of Christ.

Jesus was not only a prophet trying to restore to the Law its lost perspective, he was also a wise man. In this proposition we get a

clue to the answer to a perplexity that must have puzzled us as we studied the Gospels—our inability to reduce the religious ideas and the moral injunctions of Jesus to any simple consistency. The Gospels are full of contradictions, and these contradictions have been the occasion and the warrant for the most diversified accounts of the Christian life. The truth of the matter seems to be that Jesus allowed the native wisdom, which his racial maturity gave him, to suggest a certain noncoöperation with the convictions of those whom he was addressing. He seems always to be seeking the whole truth of religion by affirming the neglected half truth. He will not stay on the mountain of transfiguration, because its otherworldliness is only a religious half truth; he will go down into the insane world of actualities, where religion must also be sought and affirmed. When the crowds press around him and the world is too much with him, then, on the contrary, he goes apart into a desert place to pray.

Hence the custom, so obvious in the Gospels, of dealing with each situation as it arises. Jesus has no uniform advice for all men, he

meets each individual where he is and as he is, and then proposes whatever is needed to fulfill the imperfect religion that men bring to him. When a man is content with too immediate definitions of religious interest and duty Jesus bids him sell all he has and give it to the poor, that he may learn what other-worldliness means. But when other-worldliness becomes a platitude, with the gift laid upon the altar and labeled "Corban," Jesus reminds men of the valid this-worldly claims of a father and a mother to a just religious consideration. What Jesus said to men in the name of religion depended very largely upon what they needed to have said to them to restore their lost sense of the two worlds, which religion forever requires.

We have in the operation of this wise principle of alternation a clue to the reading of a riddle in the Gospels, which is otherwise insoluble—the vexed matter of the contradictory accounts of the Kingdom of Heaven. In certain passages of the Synoptic Gospels the Kingdom is presented as an indwelling fact, already present in the lives of disciples and maturing in the world. In passages of another

kind the Kingdom of Heaven is a transcendent reality, not yet manifest on earth, which will be suddenly revealed at the end of the age.

Conventional criticism has leaped to the conclusion that Jesus could not have held these mutually exclusive ideas. It has been the custom to say that one of these general conceptions must have been original with him, while the other is to be attributed to the evangelists. The difficulty has been to decide which was Jesus' idea and which the evangelists', since both types of teaching belong to the oldest tradition and both are equally well attested. In want of any objective reason for preferring the one to the other, critics have fallen back upon their own religious preferences for this-worldliness or other-worldliness. It is doubtful whether this frankly subjective process should call itself a criticism of the Gospels. "It's a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you mustn't call it Homer!"

The most recent scholarship is therefore inclined to leave this matter as it finds it. The Synoptic tradition seems to be fairly reliable. Certainly, if we break up this oldest stratum under our feet we have no standing

ground left. Thus Professors Foakes Jackson and Lake say, "If discussion be limited strictly to passages in which the Kingdom of God is mentioned, far the most probable result is that in the Gospels it sometimes means the Sovereignty of God, regarded as a present reality, and sometimes the Age to Come." In reply to the shortsighted dogmatic criticism which has said that we cannot have it both ways this maturer wisdom affirms that, whether we understand it or not, we must have it both ways.

When we reflect upon the implications of this dilemma we become more reconciled to it. The Kingdom of Heaven is the metaphor that Jesus used to indicate his idea of all that is meant by religion. Were the Gospel account of the Kingdom confined either to the sociological or to the apocalyptic interpretation we should find the mind of Jesus wanting at a point where religiously mature minds ought not to be found wanting. A religious teacher must keep this world and the other world constantly in view, and in his teaching we shall observe some principle of alternation and process of compensation. The demand for any

simpler consistency is the bugbear of minds that lack wisdom.

We are probably somewhere within the area of demonstrable historical truth when we say that the survival of Christianity must be due in part to the hereditary wisdom of the mind in which it was born, and to the persistence of that mind in its subsequent tradition. The New Testament has set its mark upon the thinking of Christians by providing not only much of the content of their thought but even more by determining the method of their thinking.

The Christian church seems always to have known by intuition—and had no need to learn this truth by costly experience, since antecedent Judaism had provided the experience—that too simple and consistent accounts of religion are to be avoided. Its constant tendency to breed nonconformists and noncoöperators witnesses to the hold which this conviction has upon its deeper mind. So far from seeking to arrest its mind at some median line and to achieve a golden mean, Christianity leaves the pendulum swinging freely. So far from saying, "Nothing in excess," Christianity is a religion

which affirms excesses, in alternation. Its books of devotion and its major treatises of theology all have this paradox at the heart of them. I suggest that the survival of Christianity is bound up in part with the constant operation of this native wisdom that inhabits and inspires its permanent mind.

We come therefore to a working answer to the question, Should a church coöperate with its age or should it withhold its coöperation from that age? The answer indicated is this: The Christian church never opposes or denies those truths of religion which find fair statement in the spirit of any age, but it never contents itself with approving of those truths as they are. Each of those truths, in the dialectic of history, is apt to be a half truth, either of this-worldliness or other-worldliness. The church is truest to the genius of the religion that inspires it when it addresses itself to the statement of the antithetical half truth.

This means that the work of the church is not easy or congenial; it means saying the unfamiliar and often the unpopular thing. But those who are more concerned to insure the

ongoing, enduring life of religion in a society than to achieve for it any immediate popularity will accept this inevasible heritage of a measured noncoöperation as their more permanent contribution to the history of Christianity. The task may seem hard, but it is necessary.

These meditations upon the principle of religious noncoöperation suggest an appraisal of the situation in which we now find ourselves. The more orthodox types of Christianity, represented by Romanism and Fundamentalism, are traditionally other-worldly in their religious emphasis. This is their strength; it is also their weakness, and they stand in constant need of the correction provided by an interest in the religious claims of this world.

Those of us, however, who belong to that vague society known as liberal Protestantism represent a revolt against the excessive other-worldliness of conventional orthodoxy.

In reaffirming the religious significance of this world and the life that now is we have deliberately limited our religious horizon. Many among us confess themselves agnostic as to any world or life other than this. We

miss the noble and prophetic majesty of death because we shirk its awful certainty. We are sentimentalists about death because we dare not be realists.

In the place of repentance, confession, and contrition we have substituted the corrections for character provided by the newer psychology. Instead of conceding sin we try to reorient our personal relationships. Our liberal Christianity is more reasonable and credible, perhaps, than the systems that it has replaced, but it lacks the sweep of the natural sciences and the emotional depth of great music and drama. As it gains in rationality it loses the qualities of dream, vision, and tragic reconciliation to life.

As for worship, we are vaguely aware that at this point we are inexpert and deficient; therefore we redouble our busy-ness in the hope that work is the substance of prayer. We try to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before, without stopping to ask the meaning of this endeavor in sight of the time when some wind shall blow across the world so cold that no blade of grass will grow, more.

Yet most of us are vaguely aware either that we personally have lost something out of our Christianity, within our own memory, or that our kind of Christianity has sacrificed something in the last two or three generations.

We now waken to a Sunday that is no different from any other day in the week. The one-time quiet of its morning, broken first by the sound of the church bells, is gone. Sunday now dawns to the unremitted roar of the traffic of every day. The change is felt in connections such as this.

When we go to church, still an aura of secularity hangs about its tempers and transactions. The church school approximates more and more to the most approved methods of the day school. The services of worship reflect and interpret in wholesome ethical ways the concerns of the other six days of the week.

What we have lost is that which religion requires, the perpetual suggestion of a saving contrast. There is not enough difference in our lives to give us that correction and help that religion, when it is at its best, provides.

Liberal Protestantism is in much the same

state as that of the later Stoicism of Rome: it is heroic, ethically intense, and sincere. But it is trying to make this world do whole duty in religion, and there is always the danger that it may be slowly starving itself to death on its valid but inadequate half truth.

Now non-coöperation with the spirit of this age must mean for most of us a deliberate refusal to reduce religion to the dimensions of this-worldliness and an insistence upon the complementary half truth of other-worldliness. Liberal Protestantism cannot discharge its religious duty to the time merely by lending its pious sanction and support to what is best in the spirit of this age: it must say plainly, with conviction, and if need be with courage, what the age is leaving unsaid. It must reckon with the man of whom I heard it said, not long since, that he was not afraid there was no immortality, he was afraid there was an immortality!

Some years ago there appeared in England a brief appreciation of the life of Thomas Huxley. For many of us Huxley is, and must always remain, one of the finest incarnations of the spirit of this age. He is a comrade in

the moral struggle and in the intellectual adventure of modern life. We concede him his self-designation as an agnostic, we cannot concede that he was an irreligious man. Therefore we are the more conscious of the truth of the words with which this particular appreciation of Huxley ended—not so much because they were true of him as because we know them to be doubly true of ourselves. They intimate the limitations of too much of the liberal Protestantism of our time:

"There is a very pleasant picture in his life of the Sunday evenings in St. John's Wood in the latter years. In summer the family are gathered in the garden. Friends drop in, there is talk of the latest scientific results, of progress, and the smiting of the enemy. It is the afternoon of the successful man, golden, but with a touch of evening and the approaching night. There is that in plenty which should accompany old age: honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. Only in the end something appears lacking. Perhaps the outlook entirely narrowed to a fragment of time and the success of a lifetime stands judged by the sense of larger issues beyond. It is Sunday evening. Outside the walled garden is a chaos of con-

fusion and pain. And as the twilight falls there comes the sound of a world-old appeal renewed ever in humility and patience: 'Pitifully behold the sorrows of our hearts. Mercifully forgive the sins of Thy people.'"

IV

INDIVIDUALISM

IV

INDIVIDUALISM

The Fourth Gospel ends with a moving dialogue between Christ and Peter. This dialogue is found in a chapter that is an afterthought and in a gospel to which we do not habitually turn for strict history. But here as elsewhere the Fourth Gospel is significant as revealing the mind that wrote it.

Peter is told to follow his Master and to feed the sheep. Turning and seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved, Peter says, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." With this story the canonical Gospels end, and we pass over into the Apostolic Age.

The Christian church was the product of that age. It came into being as the natural expression of the commonalty of Christian experience, first clearly realized at Pentecost.

The leaven of charity within and the rigors of persecution without matured the corporate life of those early Christians very rapidly. The doctrine of the body and the members, elaborated in First Corinthians, gives some warrant to the statement that St. Paul, rather than Jesus, was the founder of the church. It is therefore the more strange to find, late in the First Century or early in the Second Century, this stubborn strain of individualism at the end of the last of the Gospels. Peter, or at least Peter's duty, stands etched sharply against the horizons of the time.

The very human question, "What shall this man do?" has been asked many times in the last eighteen hundred years. It has furnished convenient shelter from the inquisitions of conscience. Plainly, I must not allow my duty to become so particularized that its doing separates me from my fellows. I must move with society as a whole. How can I tell what my duty is until first I know what the other man ought to do?

In Jesus' time men pleaded, as the ground for exemption from obedience to his summons, the field or the yoke of oxen they had

bought, the wives they had married, the fathers whom they must bury. These considerations are all cared for to-day by one blanket obligation, that of defending one's social status. The social gospel is always launched as a crusade, but when its initial enthusiasms wane it becomes a very convenient city of moral refuge. Its summonses, which were at first a stimulus to conscience, too often end as a sedative for conscience.

Jesus' blunt words, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me," gather up much that is taught more clearly and perhaps more certainly in the earlier Gospels. There is in the ethics of Jesus an ineradicable strain of individualism, which lends much warrant to Tolstoi's statement, that Jesus gives no rules for society as a whole, he merely tells each man what he ought to do.

The Protestant tradition, to which we belong, was for many centuries predominantly individualistic. The roots of the Reformation are to be found in the lay brotherhood movements of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Those movements were not only a protest against the abuses of the Papacy and

the great orders, they represented a conviction that the salvation of his own soul is a man's personal concern, not to be delegated to an institution or a priesthood.

The individualism of the Reformation found congenial soil in England and among Englishmen. The Anglo-Saxon character is more solitary and self-sufficient, less fluid than that of Latins and Orientals. As a polity for churches individualism begins to appear in England at the close of the Sixteenth Century. It crossed the ocean with the Pilgrims at the opening of the Seventeenth Century.

This interpretation of life was eminently serviceable during the early days in America. Pioneers have to be self-reliant and resourceful. When it came to churches, the scattered congregations of the wilderness did not lend themselves readily to centralized government. The geography of this seaboard had quite as much to do with the vindication of the "New England Way" as did the sanctions supposedly derived from the New Testament.

Individualism not only suited the time of colonization, it served the rising tempers of

political disaffection. It expressed naturally the religious concerns of embattled farmers and minute men. And on into the first half of the last century the congregational type of church, mobile and unencumbered, with a capacity for initiative and the power to reach its own conclusions without reference to ecclesiastical headquarters, fitted the occasion and the need of the time of expansion.

The result, in the person of the average American Protestant and his local church, was a more highly individualized type of Christianity than the world had ever seen. Many factors, political and economic as well as doctrinal, had conspired to make this man and his religious institutions what they were.

It has sometimes seemed to me that this movement, which had been in process for four or five hundred years, came to its cultural and doctrinal climax in the town of Concord, Massachusetts, somewhere about the year 1850. The Concord School was hardly a beloved community: it was a collection of unique individuals. The iron string of self-reliance twanged loudly in their lives, and its echoes may still be heard on the pages of their writ-

ings. Whoso would be a man in the Concord of those days must be a nonconformist.

In a reflective mood I sometimes go out and sit on the edge of Walden Pond to recover, so far as is possible, the mood of that time and of those men; for men and times have changed. The little bay where Thoreau built his hut is well off the road and relatively inviolate. But within the last few years Walden Pond has been saved in something like its early integrity only at the price of becoming a State Reservation. Public bath houses have been built on the northern shore. A parking place has been provided for rows of cars, and not-too-garish lunch counters line the highway. On Sundays and holidays motor police keep the road open and the traffic moving.

Altogether I hardly dare to open my *Walden* to reread the passage in which Thoreau describes the beginning of this change in his own time, with the building of the railroad and the stringing of the telegraph wires along the southern edge of the Pond. Much of what has happened since fulfills his sober verdict, that our inventions are improved means to an unimproved end. We have socialized his soli-

tariness, we have turned his whimsical vocations into our idle avocations, but do we know more than he knew about man and nature? It is harder than it should be to recover his "first fine careless rapture." No one has written since then another Journal to match his own. There is no prospect that any member of the State Highway Commission, the motorcycle police, or the Sunday crowds is in a fair way to produce a second *Walden*. Such a book as that must be conceived in solitude; it cannot be drafted by a committee or compiled by a crowd. If we have gained something we have also lost something.

Probably American culture could go no farther in that direction. Emerson, Alcott, Thoreau, stand at a point beyond which social life is impossible. They found it hard enough to live amicably with each other, to say nothing of living with other men. They had passed quite beyond even the most liberal churches, which had proved to be only halfway houses on the road to their self-sufficing solitude. Thoreau had the greatest difficulty remaining within the state, and on at least one memorable occasion was recovered to

citizenship against his own will. Beyond him and his kind lay philosophic anarchy. Indeed, more than one of these men had set foot in that Utopia.

We, on the contrary, belong to an age that has been in revolt against that whole ideal of life and type of culture. We could not have gone farther in that direction if we would, and we would not if we could. There was, indeed, a strain of the caricaturist in Thoreau which offended sober people. He and his kind turned us away from that grotesque and self-refuting individualism toward a more social interpretation of life.

Meanwhile some of us still find ourselves members of churches in which the polity of individualism holds over from that past. I am betraying no secrets when I say that all is not well with churches so organized. The denominational consciousness, to say nothing of the catholic consciousness, is weak in the fellowship of such churches, and their common tasks are prosecuted in spite of the intractability of single congregations. Sects with more centralized forms of church government are making more rapid headway. Indeed, certain of

these individualistic churches, having exhausted the resources of their polity, are beginning to discuss some vague "free catholic church," which shall be a more faithful symbol and instrument of the Christian social consciousness.

The pietists in these individualistic churches attribute their latter laggard history to a decline of religious fervor or to the virus of modernism, which is supposed to be poisoning our systems. Personally I discount these charges. We are neither appreciably less earnest nor more heretical than many of our ecclesiastical neighbors.

The difficulty is, rather, a mechanical one. A church with an individualistic polity does not provide an altogether ideal vehicle for the expression of the religion of a time that thinks and acts corporately. There is a discrepancy between this type of Christian institution and the institutions in the secular world around.

If you go into any such church you are in the only church of just that kind in all Christendom. It has its own creed, or if not its own creed, then its own covenant. Its order of worship may reflect the general usage of its fellowship, but will always reveal certain

idiosyncrasies. You have to consult the printed flyleaf for the day to be sure just what is going to happen. All this is disconcerting to the worshipper who is accustomed, in other areas, to live and move in a world of uniform processes and products.

Turn from such an individualistic church to the secular environment. Ours has become the age of the linked-up broadcast, of the new Ford and the Statler hotels, of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the Mazda lamp. There has been here a steady endeavor to reduce the necessary patterns of things to the bare working minimum.

Let us be quite clear about this: each of these items in the world of standardization is good and cheap and well worth its price. Altogether these familiar national products mean less effort and waste, more comfort and leisure, than any people has ever known before. Above all, these familiar national wares are the outward and visible symbol of the newly felt solidarity of American life. They are the counters which passing through our hands make us aware that we are sharing life with a hundred million of our fellow citizens.

When we turn from this world of standard processes and products to our churches we find ourselves still tied to an archaic individualism. We buy, sell, travel, and take our pleasures in a world that has repudiated individualism; we go to church in institutions that still perpetuate this ideal. Hence the discrepancy between our religion and the rest of our life. Ought not these little fortresses of private practice to be brought up to date?

On a spring holiday two or three years ago I found myself wandering of an April evening through the streets of Palermo. The guidebook spoke favorably of the opera at Palermo, and I turned that way. The opera house was shut; the only attraction in Palermo that night was a five-reel American film. This was distinctly disappointing. Movie houses are commonplaces at home, but it is not every day that one can hear Italian opera in Italy. Sicily is a long way off, and travel is costly; Sicily should have provided more contrast.

We Americans are not popular in Europe to-day. The superficial reason for our unpopularity is a matter of common knowledge on both sides of the water. The war left us the

creditor nation, and the debts provide a considerable and constant irritation all over Europe, not to be allayed by the Yankee dictum, "They hired the money, didn't they?" But if you ever get beyond this first ground of international contention and succeed in persuading some friendly and thoughtful European to talk to you freely about these matters, he will tell you that, while the debts irk him, they are not the only ground of his disaffection. He has had a vision of our standardized American civilization passing, like some remorseless steam roller, over the whole of Europe, crushing out all local customs and reducing them to a dead level of mediocre uniformity.

The contrasts between Cornwall and Cumberland, Prussia and Bavaria, Piedmont and Sicily, have meant much in the past to those concerned. Love of the soil, pride of custom, diversity of character, have flourished in each place. But now the uniformity that kings, conquests, and constitutions could not achieve is being silently effected by salesmen from Detroit and Hollywood.

It seemed to me that night in Palermo that

I was looking on the defeat of individualism and the triumph of standardization. I was invited to say, "The King is dead. Long live the King." But I was strangely wanting in any patriotic satisfaction at this change; my sympathies were with our European critics. For their fears and defeats presaged the passing of the kind of Christianity in which I had been brought up and to which I still pledged fealty.

Perplexities, indecisions, questions came crowding to mind. Is the day of individualism past? Is this world of standardization not only inevitable but good and right? Are we ready to see the achievements of such a world, in the terms of its material wares, translated into their equivalent in human minds? Does this age require therefore a unified universal church to give expression to its native tempers and ways? Is some kind of Catholicism, old or new, necessary to the civilization of which we are now a part? Does the truth of what we call the "social gospel" lie somewhere in this area, so clearly intimated by the signs of our times?

The most that I can do here is to venture a few dogmatic answers to these questions—

answers which are indeed little more than a record of personal misgivings—in the hope that the questions themselves, rather than my answers, will suggest that you reëxamine your own premises.

As with men, so with ideas; they should beware of the time when everyone speaks well of them, for when that time comes in the history of an idea it has begun to lose some of its power of truth and is lapsing into the impotence of a platitude. The social gospel is well spoken of to-day; to speak against it is heresy. All the more reason therefore to ask what it means, for unless it is continually reëxamined it may become as dull a dogma as the elder individualism, which it was invoked to correct.

Plainly the Christian social gospel cannot be exhausted by the help of crowd psychology. We do not have in mind, or should not have in mind, when we discuss the social aspects of Christianity, the kind of transaction with which we have now become familiar on Commencement Day in many American universities. The number of candidates for degrees has got out of hand. On what is for them the crowning day of their career thus far, the

system breaks down. Hundreds of graduates file past the presiding officer and receive diplomas, which must be awarded in random haste and exchanged in some subsequent leisure. What possible satisfaction can I draw on such an occasion from the parchment I hold in my hand, which says that the trustees of the institution have welcomed some other man into the society of educated persons? Or what confidence can I have in a system which, at that significant hour, seems to have mistaken what I know for what another man knows? If the social gospel means simply some such human "series" struck off a single pattern, it must leave us profoundly dissatisfied. Any such occasion provides a very inadequate intimation of the Great Assize of the universe. We cling stubbornly to the persuasion that the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe, who shepherds all human flocks, has the power to call his own sheep by name. Any social gospel which denies that power is not consonant with the teaching of Jesus or the intuition of the Christian centuries.

A more plausible account of the social gospel stresses the perfected interplay of the

human parts of the racial machine. Religion is thus described as the organization of individuals into coöperative groups for the functional expression of personality through reciprocal relations. Abstract phrases such as these are assembled and then "tuned up" in the modern theological machine shop.

Whenever I come across this latest model of smooth-running dogmatic theology—as dogmatic as any Calvinism of the past—I am reminded of nothing so much as of a finely built, silently purring, high-powered automobile, perhaps the most characteristic product and the most suggestive symbol of our culture. Yet the situation in which we now find ourselves is this: our cars are better than our streets and roads, our machinery for taking a ride better than the ride we can take. What we can do with our cars compares unfavorably with the cars themselves. Hence the pleasure of motoring, as every driver knows, has to be found in the performance of the car itself rather than in seeing the countryside and arriving at a destination.

There is by inference a type of highly organized institutional life in America—churches

included—which seeks and finds the satisfactions of human life in the smooth interplay of the human running parts. The coöperating members of such a society are saved from loneliness, but their salvation is achieved at the price of the standardization of their thoughts and feelings. Members of such societies may not have private reservations, solitary convictions, prophetic insights. We arrive, in this type of institution, at the preposterous situation in which we now find ourselves with our motors and our roads. In our Christianity, our churches, if such a thing be possible, seem better than their own religion. At least the institutional apparatus for serving religion seems better than the religion it expresses or achieves. The social gospel is thus parodied by the machine.

We need to realize that no social gospel will ever satisfy the requirement of the Christian idea, if it allows the intimation that you and I suffice to constitute a Christian society. Every church requires not only you and me, it requires also what has been called "the shadowy third." This is true of all permanent human societies. The truth of your relation to

other men, in such societies, is never wholly stated or completely exhausted by your direct coöperation with them. Behind every thought and deed shared with others is always this "shadowy third" that is at once the solvent of individualism and the matrix of social experience.

I do not go to a concert for the sake of sitting for two hours with a company of my fellow human beings and then happen upon the music by accident. I go to a concert because I care for music and know there will be music there; but, going, I find myself in a society of like-minded persons, and we share together a truly social experience. The social nature of the hour, however, presupposes the composer, soloist, conductor, who is a "shadowy third" that each of us has known in his solitude.

Augustine was drawn to Ambrose of Milan because, as he tells us with fine simplicity, he found in Ambrose one who was kind to himself. But the matter did not rest there. Ambrose gave to Augustine not merely his friendship, he gave him also his God. Ambrose prepared Augustine for the loneliness of that critical hour in the garden when he stood face to face

with God. The "shadowy third," therefore, is the beginning and the ending of all deeply social experience, and this "shadowy third" may be, indeed must be, known in privacy, before it can give its full meaning to our social life.

There is abroad a type of religious thinking which would have us recapitulate the primitive tribal nature of the religious life. Theoretically this return to a very remote past in the life of the race would seem to be unnecessary. The religious movements to which we now belong had their immediate origins with great men; prophets, reformers, pilgrims. These great individuals have intervened since the tribe hunted in a pack, and they have given us a new point of departure. To put it on the ground of mere economy of time and effort, no one of us can afford to go back to the caves of Altamira as the personal point of departure for his spiritual life. So, life is not long enough for us to live over again in detail the tribal period of primitive religion. We have to accept our heritage as it comes to us and go on from that point. Practically, we should turn back the clock of common morality if we insisted

upon verifying the ethics of the book of Judges in personal conduct.

More often, however, we are religiously frustrated, at the other end of the social process, by those who seem to be trying to avert the flowering of single mature individuals, as if such individuals were too costly to the social soil and organism. There are many gardeners at work in the field of the world who prune back society so far that it never gets a chance to blossom prodigally. The danger of this process is considerable, for, failing mature individuals, we want the seed of new movements in the future.

The religious societies to which we belong are all "the lengthened shadows" of single men. These men were matured in churches that did not succeed in standardizing the religious life, but left room for prophecy. Unless Protestantism has been wholly in error the aim of our corporate Christian life is to deliver each of us, as a single soul, into the presence of God. The church is for us one of the means of grace. The end of religion is the soul with God—without intervening mediator, priest, sacraments, or helps.

The social gospel may do us a grievous wrong if it allows us to aspire to less than this or to be content with less. It is not enough that some Ambrose of Milan should have been kind to us. It is the mission of Ambrose and his institution to urge us on to what Newman calls "the thought of two and two only luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." Indeed, my chance of keeping the friendship of Ambrose depends upon my finding the "shadowy third" whom Ambrose intimates. St. Augustine discovered that. No one has ever stated better than he the permanent truth of all Christian societies, "Blessed is he who loves Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone loses no one dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him who never can be lost."

I have had occasion lately to reread the story of St. Francis. It throws some light on these matters. St. Francis, when first we see him and again as we last see him, is a solitary figure. At the outset of his Christian life he is just a single man, carrying stones in his own two hands to mend the little ruined church of St. Damien. He is not concerning himself

about what other men ought to do; he has organized no society to undertake the restoration of the building. He is doing the thing that he believes Christ would have him do. Again, at the last, we find him once more alone, this time apart on the mountain at La Verna. He is keeping solitary vigil before he passes over to his Lord and his God. But between this individualism at the beginning and again at the ending of his life were the years he spent with his order.

Early in his public life St. Francis saw the parting of the ways to which he must come. He was mainly concerned to rescue the life of Jesus from centuries of neglect and to rehabilitate the manner of that life in the rule of his own life. Whatever we may think of the rule of Francis, it was an honest attempt to make Christ live again among men, and he succeeded thus far, that by common consent he more than any other one man in these two thousand intervening years suggests Jesus.

He seems to have had, if not that fear of disciples which many great leaders have had, at least a fear of organizing his disciples too highly, a dread of institutionalism. For him

the road parted at the point where one way led off into formal ecclesiasticism and the other way held on toward spontaneity and solitude.

The story of the Franciscan movement is essentially that of the struggle between the ideals of hermit and cenobitic life. In the terms of the characters of two men and their successors the story is concerned with that difference of policy which from the first divided Friar Francis and Friar Elias. As an organized society there is no doubt that the Order of the Friars Minor owes far more to Friar Elias than to St. Francis. The great houses were his creation. They outlasted and finally wore down the little hermitages that sheltered the advocates of the first rule. In these great houses, however, the old abuses of communal monasticism made their reappearance and year by year reduced the opportunity for the survival of that saintliness of character which we find in St. Francis and his more scrupulous disciples.

Before his death St. Francis saw his probable defeat at the hands of institutionalism, resigned his post as minister general of the order, and retired to La Verna. This flight, if it be so

construed, was an attempt on his part to recover the prejudiced integrity of his earlier ideas, which could be reaffirmed only in solitude. The story of the stigmata, which he is said to have received there, is very obscure and perhaps must be attributed to later invention. But it is plain that St. Francis wished to know again "the self-sufficing power of solitude." He wanted to be, at the last, alone with God.

Now, so far as I know, no critic or biographer has ever suggested that St. Francis did wrong in leaving the order and going to La Verna. No one has accused him of treason in so doing, or of any want of due regard for the need of the world. Indeed, so far as his influence over men has been concerned, that influence comes from the first and the last periods of his life rather than from the middle period. The busy crowded years yield less than the years when he stands out clearly as a single soul intent upon reincarnating the life of Jesus, or realizing his union with God, through his final fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.

This story vindicates the poet's saying that

our earth is "a vale of soul-making." Christian societies come into being around souls such as that of Francis, restoring the Church of St. Damien; and they endure in the world to yield up to history and to the spiritual order souls such as that which kept its watch at La Verna.

The social gospel is a necessary halfway house between these extremes, but it is only a halfway house—not more. If we try to make it a permanent resting place it is false to its origins and defeats its own end. Not that the social life of the sons of God is not perpetually renewed or that we are ever separated from the multitude that no man can number, but that until God as "the shadowy third" has been known by men in their solitude the ground for any religious society is unstable.

Otherwise the social gospel must be differently construed. Otherwise,

"In a little peace, in a little peace,
Like fierce beasts that a common thirst makes brothers,
We draw together to one hid dark lake."

We come then to some such conclusion as this—the truth of the social gospel is not to be

sought and found in any attempt to standardize Christian experience. At this point metaphors drawn too hastily from our environing culture may mislead us. We are dealing with life processes, not with the assembling and operating of machines.

Living things tend to produce "mutations." These mutations are the unique individuals who portend new things. Without them there is no progress. If we knew how a St. Francis happens we should know all mysteries. Meanwhile we may be grateful that he does happen and certainly must do nothing to prevent his happening or to frustrate him when he has happened. Christianity cannot get on without its saintly individuals.

Apparently, therefore, churches organized upon the individualistic polity have a principle to defend. Their mission, however, is not to affirm their polity, but to breed saints. Now, can we look to churches, organized on this individualistic basis, to yield us the mature individuals whom Christianity always requires? The answer to this question is by no means clear, and certainly we cannot take the affirmative answer as a matter of course.

Denominationally many of us look back to some single prophetic individual—perhaps a group of individuals—who was the founder of our sect. The fact that we are his ecclesiastical heirs is, however, no pledge that we are also his spiritual children. On memorial and festival occasions we gather to decorate his tomb, but we often observe that the persons among us who are seriously trying to perpetuate his living spirit do not have a uniformly easy time in our midst. The discrepancy between the honor that we accord to the prophet who is safely entombed, and the discipline we mete out to the prophet who is disconcertingly alive, is one of the permanent ironies of church history. If there are, in Christian history, "tears of things," they are here. Individualist churches are by no means tolerant of prophets in their own midst.

Where have these single mature individuals of whom we are speaking sprung up? I strongly suspect that they are by no means the yield of sectarianism, but rather that they come most naturally to their maturity in churches which are more or less universal rather than highly specialized. The alluvial

deposit of religious history must be rich and deep to furnish the social soil for saintliness.

True, these maturer saints have more often than otherwise been suspected of heresy, since they drew from the free air, by prophetic inspiration, some elements not provided by the institution. They have then been exiled or excommunicated and have taken root elsewhere.

Their prophesying was intended to add to institutionalism some half truth not given by their church and its time. In separation they have become identified, in the common mind, with the half truth of their "protest," to the neglect of the prior half truth which required that protest. Their ecclesiastical heirs made capital out of the vindicated protest, but with the passage of the years neglected and forgot what had been provided in the first instance by the conventional church from which the founder sprang.

I doubt very much whether the severer half truths of any ecclesiastical protest are of themselves sufficient to breed saints. Saints represent a religious whole truth, arrived at in part by heredity and in part by direct intui-

tion. Hence if we wish to breed saints we are under bonds to make the social soil for saintliness of life as deep and rich as possible. With the fact of inspiration we have no direct concern; at least we cannot coerce it. But we can improve the social soil.

Now the sectarian church may believe that it has a distinctive mission to the world, preaching its own peculiar truth in season and out of season. But as all of us realize, this truth is preached, in most instances, to persons already converted. And preaching to the converted never did anyone much good.

> "Each method abundantly convincing
> To those already convinced."

What was once a needed propaganda tends to degenerate into ecclesiastical self-congratulation, and there is too much thanksgiving going up from sectarian shrines that we are not as other sects, round about us.

Since most preaching is done to persons already concerned and committed, I suggest that we should all do well to give our denominational tenets a vacation of, say, ten years, and address ourselves denominationally to

discovering those truths of religion which our hereditary faith and practice ignore. I think that in this way we should have better prospect of mature and saintly individuals among us.

The holy church universal will not be achieved by adding denominations to each other, but by vindicating catholicity within each single denomination. This will mean, however, the cultivation of a more humble and docile spirit than is abroad among us. We need far more to learn what other sects know, than to be reassured once again of the truth we already know so well that it is our second religious nature. Otherwise, sectarianism, which always begins in history as an affirmation and vindication of individualism, may become the grave of individualism.

Let me venture two concrete suggestions. The nonliturgical churches are traditionally intolerant and suspicious of liturgy. The liturgical churches are mildly contemptuous of nonliturgical worship. Now in the ideal service of worship there probably will be occasion both for fixed form and for spontaneity. Each of these churches needs the correction of the

other. Each needs to cultivate the excellences and the strength of the other.

Or again, the problem of church unity resolves itself finally into the vexed question as to the nature of Christian orders. How is a man made a minister or priest? Half the churches say that he is ordained by taking his place within the Apostolic Succession and having that succession visited upon him. The other half of the churches say that a man is called to be a minister by some inward constraint, which is then confirmed by the congregation asking him to be its minister.

Here we have the historical and the mystical conceptions of the ministry. Each is valid, and each is important. Each needs the other; either alone is a half truth. If in ordaining men to the ministry we could, for a period of years, practise deliberate self-correction and self-fulfillment, making larger place than has been our wont for the historical or the prophetic conceptions of the ministry, we should deepen and enrich the whole soil in which the Christian ministry is rooted.

By deliberate self-discipline in these matters we might thus create a Christian soil out

of which saints would grow naturally. But let us not suppose that the thin and stony soil of a highly differentiated denominationalism holds in it any promise of mature individualism in Christian life.

Thus we come to understand the paradox of Father Tyrrell's life, at once catholic and individualistic. He wrote, you will remember, a book—one among many—which he called *The Faith of the Millions*. But he said whimsically to a friend that the true title of the book was *The Travails of an Irish Gentleman in Search of Religion*. The two titles are not mutually exclusive, but are indeed interdependent. That is the truth which is here at stake.

V

HUMANISM

V

HUMANISM

When Zarathustra came down from the mountain to begin his work among men—so runs Nietzsche's tale—he met an old man in the forest. The old man told him that he lived there, making and singing hymns to God. When Zarathustra heard that he said, "What should I give thee? Let me hurry hence lest I take aught away from thee." And when he had gone Zarathustra said, "Can it be possible! The old saint in the forest hath not yet heard of it, that *God is dead!*"

With these words Nietzsche takes farewell of the conventional Christianity of his time and embarks on the elaboration of his theory that henceforth "the object of mankind should lie in its highest individuals."

The resultant religion of humanity is one of the oldest, as it is also one of the newest, of the world's religions. It bears to-day, in

certain quarters, the name of "humanism." This is not an altogether happy title, since the word has a long and honored history in another connection. It has been conventionally used to designate those systems of thought which centre about the concerns of man as man and is most often applied to the classical revival of the Renaissance. Humanism, so construed, defends the interests of man as against the facts and processes of environing nature. In its latest theological connection the term is probably intended to suggest the concerns of man, not as other than those of nature, but as wanting any traffic with the supernatural.

The religious humanist, so interpreted, is a person who seeks and finds the divine in man and who doubts or denies the existence of any God other than the God resident in the human will-to-goodness. Religion is therefore the civil government of the race; there is no State Department of the soul, since the soul has no spiritual Foreign Affairs.

In so far as all religions seem to require an experience of belonging, this experience is, for the humanist, to be sought and found in our

relation to the race in its entirety, to the hero of history or mythology, to the superman toward whom we tend, or to some ideal figure who is prophetically conceived as the fulfillment of the moral struggle.

When I was a student in Oxford this idea was much in the air and was described at that time as "the religion of all good men," in contradistinction to the conventional Christian system, which was said to be in ethical as well as doctrinal decline. One needs only a little familiarity with this later time to know that within certain churches there is an active revival of this religion, and that outside all churches this religion is probably far more operative than we realize. Candor and charity, as well as ordinary prudence, suggest that we should try to achieve some sympathetic understanding of the religion of humanity.

Why should we, who believe in God, shirk the fact? The first article of the creed, "I believe in God," always has been and always must be the most difficult article of the creed. This faith is not always easy to affirm and is always hard to define; never more so than under present conditions.

Those of us who still repeat the first article of the creed are not unaware of the difficulties in which we are involved. Many of these difficulties attend the traditional designations of God. The names of God, which Christian theology has habitually used, are metaphors taken from a world that is passing away. When we speak of God as Sovereign or King we presuppose the despotic governments that once gave meaning to those terms. All that we know as Calvinism had its warrant in a society in which the will of a monarch was final. To-day we live in a world in which a dictator is an anachronism and an astonishment, not what he once would have been, another tedious commonplace. We do not understand this type of figure and character, or the society that tolerates it; despots are out of date.

The felt discrepancy between the traditional language of Christian theology and the world in which we live has led some men to attempt to convert the Kingdom of God into the Democracy of God. This revolution has been a peaceful one; it remains to be seen whether it will be a successful one. We must admit,

however, that the resultant idea bears little relation to the concerns that seem to have occupied the mind of Jesus. We are doubtful what is meant or can be meant by the "Democracy of God"; the phrase is a contradiction in terms. The phrase means either the religion of humanity, decked out in a few of the salvaged crown jewels of Calvinism; or as one is more often inclined to suspect, it represents nothing but a mildly laudable desire to move with the times. Of itself this phrase is not intelligible and is at the best only a muddy compromise between those who have a memory of the time when men did believe in a God and those who look to the time when man will have to muster up courage to get along without a God.

If it be said that the finest and the most familiar of the gospel metaphors, that of the Fatherhood of God, is still warranted by human paternity, it must be replied that the metaphor does not mean now what it meant then. There are fathers and sons still, but their relation is not that which obtained two thousand years ago. Jesus spoke to men who still kept the traditions of a patriarchal society.

The father was, in that society, the object of unquestioning filial devotion, the determiner of his sons' destinies, the center of values in the life of his sons. In the Twentieth Century American home these values and references have been reversed. I am prepared to defend the proposition that many of the difficulties which the Christian idea encounters in our time have their origin in the intimation that fatherhood in the terms of the average family life around us furnishes a valid metaphor to suggest the relation of God to man. This fact, without careful reinterpretation, may be religiously misleading and inadequate.

There is further the perplexity as to God, the Creator. Plainly no divine fiat compounded man out of the dust of the earth and the universal spirit on a Friday in the year 4004 B. C. It is harder than once it was to see God walking in that garden in the cool of the evening. For those who think that the history of the universe is a tale of spinning spiral nebulæ, of condensing suns and cooling planets, and of emerging life along the muddy shores of primeval continents, the idea of creation is little more than an arbitrary point of depar-

ture. "The creation of the world" is the boundary line where our knowledge ends and our ignorance begins.

The difficulties attending all conventional doctrines of creation are so grave that many persons, still in quite reputable religious standing, have abandoned this idea in despair and have turned in the other direction. God is the point of the world's arrival. He is the unmoved mover who draws us to himself; he is that toward which nature blunders, that which man intends. We dismiss him as our Alpha that we may be the freer to seek and find him as our Omega.

This designation of God as the finisher of all things would be more credible if we were surer of some sign in the order of nature or clue to the sequence of history, indicating him. Most of us have taken comfort from the assurance that whatever dissonances man may have introduced into the universe the morning stars are always singing together for joy their majestic plain song. Professor Eddington now tells us that if there is any music of the spheres, it is much more like jazz than like Palestrina or Bach. This is a very depressing

suggestion. One had neither hoped nor expected to be required to sing the Lord's song to the tunes of a jazz band!

As for human history, we should follow the gleam with more zest if only the gleam were brighter. From the days of the book of Daniel until the times of Hegel and Karl Marx it has been assumed that some one thing is in process in history. Men have varied in their account of what is going on; some have construed history as the Drama of Redemption, others as the struggle of races and classes, still others as the unfolding of the idea of Freedom, but they have agreed that there is one silken thread on which all facts may be strung. These unitary theories of history are not so plausible as once they were; it seems to be increasingly difficult to determine what nature intends and to say what God proposes. The dislocations of schematic systems have been aggravated by the experiences of the war. Many historians and some theologians now incline to the idea that history discloses many ends but no single process.

The truth is that countless men, earnestly seeking for God, are still standing perplexed

and irresolute in Job's footsteps. They go forward, and God is not there; and backward, and they cannot perceive him. Schweitzer says that the names by which men first identified Jesus—Messiah, Christ, Logos—have become for us historical parables merely, and that to-day Jesus comes to us as one unknown, without a name. We might say the same of God; many of the elder metaphors have lost their occasion in environing fact, and he comes to us as one unknown, without a name.

I have tried to state this case fairly, I hope I have not caricatured the honest attitudes of countless serious-minded men in our time. If you feel none of these difficulties, and if you accuse those who do feel them of muddying the water, then you can have no sympathy with all such who now find themselves thrown back upon the religion of humanity. But if you have felt these perplexities, then you will not speak with contempt of those to whom the religion of humanity offers spiritual shelter and moral help.

We shall be still more patient in our endeavor to understand this position if we concede the perennial difficulty of faith in a God

at once good and omnipotent. Two remarks are pertinent here. One is a statement of Professor Whitehead's: "All simplifications of religious dogma are shipwrecked upon the rock of the problem of evil." The second is one of two or three deductions from the war, made by a group of chaplains in the British army: "The faith which will command the future will be that which deals most adequately with the problem of evil." The religion of humanity is unintelligible if it is dissevered from the difficulties that the problem of evil must always create for believers in a good and an all-powerful God.

Religion knows, in general, three ways of solving this problem. First, this world discovers to us two actual facts, good and evil; these facts suggest two rival principles at work in the world. Religion is the life of those who identify themselves with the principle of goodness in its struggle against the principle of evil. Second, there is only one principle in the world and that is the Eternal Goodness. What appears to be evil is either an illusion or the absence of good. Evil is the error or the defect from which our union with the only reality

in the world, goodness, delivers us. Third, good and evil are actual, but the evil, if properly dealt with, may be transmuted into good. Into the character of the religious man, as into the final structure of the universe, all this transmuted evil goes as a contributory and perhaps a necessary part. Not all things are now good, but all things may be made to work together for good.

We might call these solutions of the problem of evil, in turn, the practical, the theoretical, and the dramatic or the tragic.

Which of these three methods a man follows is, in the first instance, mainly a matter of temperament. Practical and active men, to whom the moral struggle is their most vital experience, incline toward the first. Speculative and meditative persons incline to the second. If you are a son of Martha, like Lincoln, you propose to hit evil every chance you get and hit it hard. If you are a son of Mary you will simply stare it out of countenance. The first method has been, on more than one occasion, declared a heresy but always persists in climbing back into the sheepfold by its own way. So long as there are men in

the world more concerned for action than for reflection this method will persist. The second method filtered into Christianity with Neoplatonic influences and has always been mildly reputable. It is implied in all those philosophies of life that are mustered to-day under the ægis of the "New Thought."

It is probably fair to say that the third of these methods is most characteristically Christian in that it makes a place for both temperaments and both methods. The tragic way accepts evil as a fact and fights it but does not fight blindly and to no purpose; it fights deliberately and thoughtfully, with the constant purpose of subduing this hard fact and rendering it a finally reconciled and changed member of a good order.

Now the religion of humanity becomes more intelligible when we realize that it is the religion of those to whom the moral struggle is the important matter, whose whole nature and temperament incline them to accept an existing dualism and to enlist on the side of goodness in its war of extermination against evil. Thus his sister says of Nietzsche that he chose Zarathustra as his hero-god for the very reason

that the Zarathustra of history was a man who, true to his Persian tradition, saw in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things. Here we have a modern Manichee for whom the universe was not a universe but two rival principles. The best of these principles, to his thinking, resided in the mind and will of man, and religion was for him, therefore, the glorification and the quest of his ideal human type.

We shall not understand the revival of this religion of humanity in our own time unless we realize that, like Fundamentalism at the other extreme, it is a natural and perhaps an inevitable consequence of war. The chaplains were not altogether wrong when they said that the religion which is to command the future will be that which deals most adequately with the problem of evil. Modern humanism implies a certain healthy impatience and indignation with too easy cures for the pain of the world during our generation.

One must admit that the other two solutions of the problem of evil are not wholly reassuring. We cannot think about what happened during the war and then dismiss it with the

bland smile of an idealism which would say, "My dear man, these things are not real." That does well enough for a civilian study; we cannot help wondering whether it would be a comforting and adequate *viaticum* for a dying soldier mangled by shrapnel. Nor is it enough to say that the war was simply a deprivation of good, a certain "silence implying sound," as Browning puts it. I should not suppose that heavy artillery would be construed by any man in his senses as "silence implying sound."

When we turn to the conventional tragic reconciliation of the evil to the good we are aware of certain pitfalls. To your humanist this formal Christian doctrine that some final good comes out of all the evil of a world war is not convincing. If we plead in extenuation of the fact and in defense of the dogma the large occasion for sacrifice, the upwelling of pity, the ministries of mercy, which attend an evil of this dimension, we leave him unconverted. He replies quite bluntly, and not without reason, that all this reduces the doctrine of the atonement to the level of the fable of roast pig. He says that if we have to destroy the whole home and house of society to get

these sweet morsels of Christian theology, then the gain is not worth the price.

There is, as St. Paul well enough knew, a subtle peril in this theory of moral alchemy which inclines us to sin that grace may abound, or if not to sin, at least to be content that we have sinned, since grace has abounded. But whatever we may think about this dark matter we should agree that the spiritual benefits from the years 1914 to 1918 have not been as considerable as the dogma requires. There is a case for the impatience of the humanist with all those who live on in complacent acceptance of the loss of thirty million human beings to the world, that they might have this tragic purging of their emotions at the world's latest Golgotha. It might be pointed out in passing that Jesus' words invite us to take our crosses and follow him, they do not sanction perpetually renewed Calvaries for the sake of the sweet sorrow that we get from witnessing a tragic drama.

The present revival of the religion of humanity, then, must be construed as a natural moral reaction to the experiences through which our generation has passed. The man

who proposes to stare evil out of countenance seems rather a poseur; the man who condones sin because of grace abounding seems to invite a recurrence of the tragedy for his soul's sake. There is much to be said for steering a safe course between this Scylla and Charybdis, and of stuffing our ears with wax against the seductions of those who say that it was all unreal or that it did some spiritual good. For plainly each of these doctrines, if it has not actually suffered shipwreck on the rock of the problem of evil, is making heavy weather on a lee shore.

Your humanist, with his simpler creed of shallower draft, is not yet aground. He has taken to the boats when the larger systems have got into difficulties. He has only his own hands and his own arms to serve the oars of his boat, he is scantily provisioned, he has had no time to get the charts and the log; but there is at least this to be said for him: he is still morally alive and afloat.

Whatever else may be salvaged from the wreck of more ambitious systems, the humanist has taken with him the will-to-goodness in the soul of a man, and all is not lost while

that is saved. It should be remembered, if we make use of metaphors in these matters, that on at least one historic occasion a great religious leader got himself and his companions ashore out of a like predicament, some on boards and others on broken pieces of the ship. There are times in the fortunes of men and societies when one buoyant moral conviction on which you can lay hold is worth all the more ambitious systems that have grounded on this submerged rock of the problem of evil.

One important difference between the dualist of yesterday and the advocate of the religion of humanity to-day must be noted. The ancient dualist believed that there was an active principle of evil operative in nature and in the present world order, to be opposed by the good man. His successor does not believe that there is any evil creator responsible for this world. If he were pressed to say what he thought he would probably say that nature and the Veiled Being behind nature are simply nonmoral. The man who professes the religion of humanity in our time is struggling, not against the ethical hostility of things, but against their ethical indifference. This struggle against the

passionless moral neutrality of things is, if anything, a more difficult and ambitious spiritual endeavor than that of the old dualist to overcome the evil God of this world. You never close with your opponent. Christian saw Apollyon, Luther aimed at the Devil with the inkpot; but we have lost that range. Instead the Childe Roland of our time comes to the dark tower of Nothingness and must put the slug horn to his lips and blow.

This situation has been faithfully described by Mark Rutherford in his story of *Miriam's Schooling:*

"This was her first acquaintance with an experience not rare, alas! but below it humanity cannot go, when all life ebbs from us, when we stretch out our arms in vain, when there is no God—nothing but a brazen Moloch, worse than the Satan of theology ten thousand times, because it is dead. A Satan we might conquer, or at least we should feel the delight of combat in resisting him; but what can we do against this leaden 'order of things' which makes our nerves ministers of madness? . . . She was now face to face with a great trouble, and she had to encounter it alone, and with no weapons and with no armour save those which Nature pro-

vides. She was not specially an exile from civilization; churches and philosophers had striven and demonstrated for thousands of years, and yet she was no better protected than if Socrates, Epictetus, and all ecclesiastical establishments from the time of Moses had never existed."

That is exactly the position of your modern proponent of the religion of humanity. So far as he can see, the conscience and good-will of man represent the best there is in the cosmos. He is proposing to close up the broken human ranks, to form a phalanx or a hollow square with his fellow men of good-will who will die in their tracks, if need be, but who will not surrender the position achieved and still held by the human conscience. If the resultant religion, experienced as the bond of sympathy between men of good-will, does not solve "all questions in the world and out of it," at least it furnishes a demonstrable and satisfying experience of belonging to something. You get much out of life when you know that other men will keep faith with you, and you put much into life when you propose to yourself the duty of keeping faith with them.

It is then possible to understand the position of those who profess to-day this religion of humanity, to admire their moral single-mindedness, and to be glad that there are men in the world who are too honest to repeat old creeds by habit and too earnest to be at ease in a world that gives much cause for ethical uneasiness.

I wish now to propose some reflections upon this whole position.

If we do not hold with these persons it is then incumbent upon us to defend the validity of our own position. Most of us who still stand in the older Christian tradition probably hold to some general theory of a tragic reconciliation of the evil to the good. We think that the doctrines which have grown up around the cross represent a true intuition. These doctrines have been more fully elaborated by Christianity than by any other system; they are not, however, confined to Christianity. They represent the moral insights of many men in many times and places. The general idea of some ultimate reconciliation underlies most of the Greek tragedies, indeed all

tragedy. If you dismiss this idea, you dismiss not merely St. Paul's plea for reconciliation to God through Christ, but at the same time Euripides's *Trojan Women* and Shakespeare's *Lear*. The point of view is characteristic of Christianity but is not peculiar to Christianity.

The peril of the position lies, as St. Augustine knew, in the perpetual exploiting of the vicarious nature of the transaction. "Why is it," St. Augustine asks, "that man likes thus to taste an unnecessary sorrow, by beholding distressing and tragical events which he would not wish to happen to himself? And yet as a spectator he wills to be touched with sorrow for them, and this sorrow is his pleasure. . . . Hence came this love of griefs—not of griefs which entered deeply into my soul: for I did not love to suffer myself the very things which I loved to behold in the play, but just the bearing and the feigning, such as only scratched, as it were, the surface." The Greeks held that we needed such experiences to provide an expression and a cleansing of our emotions. But it is a very selfish view of

history which reduces it to a perpetual tragedy that we may keep our emotions active and "purged."

The doctrine of the tragic reconciliation of evil to good, which seems to be the best Christian intuition as to this dark matter, may not be debased into a sentimental pleasure drawn from the sufferings of others. This whole idea endures moral degradation when, in Shaw's line from *St. Joan*, "a Christ must perish in every age to save those who have no imagination."

The proponent of the religion of humanity has no desire to exploit the pain of the world for his own emotional satisfaction or his moral profit. He objects to the principle of vicariousness, if that principle means that he is to get moral good at the price of the suffering of others, particularly the sufferings of the innocent. It is incumbent upon those of us who still believe that there is a profound moral truth in the tragic solution of the problem of evil, to be certain that we welcome the scars and endure the pain which the vindication of the good conscience of man seems to require. Christians are not spectators of the tribulation

that is in the world, they are participators in it, and any doctrine that absolves them from the fellowship of the sufferings of good men is patently un-Christian.

The strength of the humanist position lies therefore, as it has always lain, in its wholesome ethical ardors. It is a protest against cheap and easy answers to the problem of evil.

On the other hand, it remains a fair question whether the positive morality of this religion of humanity is as significant as its negative protest against the conventional ethics. Since the religion of humanity repudiates the prospect of any heaven with its ultimate bliss and addresses itself to bettering the fortunes of man on this earth, the end which it proposes to itself is the earthly welfare of the race rather than the rewards of an improbable immortality.

This resolute endeavor to further the welfare of the race to the neglect of other interests has bred in us what L. P. Jacks calls "a human class consciousness in the presence of the rest of the universe." We humans are, in so far as we are believers in the religion of humanity and nothing more, involved in a

class war with the universe. Is this class war morally defensible, and will it probably gain a moral victory?

"Historically considered," Dr. Jacks says, "this notion has had no great success, not even in its own terms, and from its own point of view. The kind of welfare that society achieves by concentrating attention on its own welfare, as the only thing that really matters, is bound to be second-rate and poverty-stricken. That individual selfishness is self-defeating nobody needs to be told. No human society has ever prospered, or even can prosper, by concentrating exclusive attention on its own welfare. Without a certain indifference to its own welfare, without a certain capacity for forgetting all about it in the pursuit of something greater, the life of society, even if international, is bound to be shallow and miserable; while society itself, considered as having no function but to exploit the universe for its own advantage, stands out in colors which can only be described as morally despicable.

"The best things human society enjoys at this moment are the result of efforts which have *not* had the welfare of society for their object; while of the worst evils not a few can be directly traced to its corporate selfishness—to its lack of reverence for anything but itself.

Social selfishness in morality, like institutional selfishness in religion, acts as a deadly stranglehold on the spirit of man.

"Of the goods possessed by society the best are religion, philosophy, science, and art. These are not the products of the entire human class consciousness, absorbingly concentrated on the welfare of society. The human class consciousness is fatal to them all. They flourish only in minds which have risen above it."*

Now these are very strong words and as a statement of intention would be repudiated by many proponents of the religion of humanity. A man who devotes himself sacrificially to the welfare of society can hardly be described as a consciously selfish man. Nevertheless, the case is not wholly bettered when one becomes an advocate for the corporate self-interest of the race.

The man who professes the religion of humanity would be the last to admit his identity with the primitive magician, yet the two positions are not wholly dissimilar. If we concede the cosmic class war, which must follow from the human class consciousness, the race

*_My Neighbour the Universe_, p. 77 ff., L. P. Jacks, Cassel & Company, London. 1928.

will be increasingly tempted to exploit the rest of the universe in its own interests. This exploitation of the universe, by coercive measures, is precisely what is known as magic, and the history of religion is nothing but a tedious endeavor to dissuade man of his deep-rooted magical intention. There is no more reason to suppose that corporate racial magic will succeed in the future than to conclude that private magic has succeeded in the past. The positive ethics of the religion of humanity promises therefore to be self-defeating.

Nor is there much prospect that this religion of humanity will succeed in persuading men to remain content with the agnosticism which they affect toward the environing mysteries. Much of the religious perplexity of the present moment arises from our heady desire to substitute knowledge for faith and our inclination to limit religion to the realm of information empirically won.

No one denies the mystery that occasions the newer agnosticism. But the affectation of indifference in the presence of mystery is a very different matter from an initial confession of

ignorance and a subsequent profession of faith. There is no reason to suppose that the studied affectation of indifference can be permanently maintained.

In the book of Job we have, in the story of the spiritual history of a single man, a study of the course run by the religion of humanity. Job began by being a theist. The problem of evil and the mystery of the universe made him a tentative humanist; he stood on his integrity; he defended his own good conscience. As for the rest, once had he spoken, and twice, but he proposed at the last to be silent and to speak no more about God or the insoluble problem of his place in the cosmos.

At that very moment the inquisition of the whirlwind came upon him. He was bidden to gird up his loins like a man, to stand and to give answer. Whether he would or no, he was compelled, by outward coercion and inward necessity, to speak. If the book of Job means anything at all it means that the pose of studied agnosticism is not permanently tenable. To be a man is to go on record about the nature of the mysterious universe around us.

Can the proponent of the religion of human-

ity permanently maintain his studied pose of deliberate indifference to the universe? I doubt it. Restricting religion to the concerns of man as man, the humanist denies to man as man his most characteristic activity, the ability to ask hard questions about the ultimate mystery and to hazard working answers. The religion of humanity may persuade some puzzled and tired minds to give up thinking about these matters. It will never persuade all men to do so, and will not deter the boldest minds from doing so. We human beings may be, as the mediæval mystic has it, in the far country. The question is whether there is in the universe a "homeland of the human soul." If we are ultimately homeless in the universe, then the basic conviction of all great religions is an error, and what remains to us by way of conceits to divert our solitary confinement in this death house hardly deserves the name of religion.

The natural sciences tell us that in due time a writ of eviction is to be served upon man as the tenant of this planet. We cannot avoid the suspicion that this writ of eviction may be an order for our racial execution. We can die,

bravely, affirming that this is a far better thing that we do than we have ever done before. But we shall suspect in that last racial pose a strain of sentimental affectation. The note of religious reality will be wanting.

Meanwhile we shall boldly try to break jail. And we are not without the help of those who are forever attempting to effect this delivery. For the human mind refuses to be content with the pose of self-concern and self-sufficiency. That mind is never truer to itself than when it says:

> "Night moves in silence round the pole,
> The stars sing on unheard,
> Their music pierces to the soul
> Yet borrows not a word."

The environing mystery is contemplated by the human mind, in a measure explored and slowly known by the mind. The minds that are most seriously engaged in this most human of all endeavors are the very minds that come to believe in the unborrowed reality of our neighbor the universe.

One must suppose, if we have reached some parting of the ways and now have on the one

hand the religion of humanity and on the other the tempers of dispassionate science, that what is meant by religion has more to hope from the latter concern than from the former. The religion of humanity denies the unborrowed divine reality around us. Pure science already affirms the unborrowed reality of these mysteries and seems slowly to be affirming their probable divine worth and meaning.

The names do not matter—religion, science, call them what you will. What matters is the profoundest and the most characteristic of man's endeavors, his endeavor to know the nature of his universe. So long as that endeavor goes on the prospect of religion lives. When that endeavor dies the strongest incitement to religion dies with it. We may doubt, therefore, the success of the religion of humanity in its natural but probably futile attempt to persuade man to be satisfied with studied indifference to the environing mystery and to content himself with the affirmation of the human will-to-goodness.

It is told of one of our scientists that a friend recently spoke to him of that monster

red star in Orion, Betelgeuse, which in its dimensions dwarfs this planet and visits upon man the familiar "astronomical intimidation" of such considerations. The friend proposed as a consolation and compensation Pascal's reassuring suggestion, that the scientist was more than the star, because the scientist could think about the star, while the star could not think about the scientist. The scientist conceded this point, then added, "But I shall soon be gone, and Betelgeuse will still be there."

The race will eventually be gone from this planet, but even then, Betelgeuse will still be there. Religion is forever concerned with what will "still be there" when we are no longer here. It dares to hope, bold as that hope and faith may seem, that we are not lost to the "There," and that somewhere in the "There" our joys are confirmed, our sorrows and pains interpreted, our struggles fulfilled. But even should this not be so, Betelgeuse will "still be there." And the mind of man cannot ignore what will be there when this planet can be no longer the scene for the religion of humanity.

Still further, it is difficult to see how this

religion of humanity can maintain, within its bundle of human life, those contrasts which religion requires. My God, like me as he may be, must be also unlike me. The idea of the divine requires that. The religion of humanity may begin by proposing a difference between myself as worshipper and the hero, or the idealized race, as the object of my worship, but it is difficult to maintain this contrast.

During the Long Parliament there was a party in England which appeared in the army known as the "Levellers." These persons proposed, as their name indicates, to level all ranks and to establish equality of titles and estates through the realm. It is very hard to see how the religions of humanity are to prevent the rise of "Levellers" in their own ranks. The qualitative differences between myself and my fellow men are not so great as to provide an insuperable obstacle to the "Leveller."

Every religion probably invites its own particular form of heresy and skepticism. The doubt which must invade the religions of humanity will express itself, first, as disparagement of the hero. "Show our critics a great

man," says Carlyle, "they begin to what they call 'account' for him; not to worship him but to take the dimensions of him—and bring him out to be a little kind of man! He was 'the creature of his Time,' they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything, he nothing—but what we the little critic could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work. . . . No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men. It is the last consummation of unbelief."

How to preserve the religiousness of our faith in the race or in great men against the critical inroads of the "Levellers" is a problem to which the religions of humanity should devote most serious attention. The doctrine of these heretics is implicit in the religion, as a liability, from the first. One must suppose that these religions of humanity, conceived at first in entire good faith and affirming at first the contrast between the believer and the ideal race, will slowly lose the note of religiousness and become frankly ethical movements wanting the duality of the religious consciousness. The element of "otherness" and the conscious-

ness of belonging to an "other" seems certain to die a lingering but inevitable death.

The situation is not saved merely by affirming our membership in a society which embraces all men who have lived, are living, and are yet to live. There is no reason why a proponent of the religion of humanity should not believe in immortality, and believing in immortality our human relationships pass beyond the walls of this world. Humanism may affirm its faith in what Edmund Burke calls "the great primeval contract of eternal society, connecting the visible and invisible worlds."

But the idea of immortality without any God other than ourselves, so far from being a help, is to many minds an intolerable burden. Father Tyrrell reminds us that the indefinite prolongation of our present existence is the Buddhist idea not of heaven but of hell. The Christian hope of immortality has always intimated that we live not only a longer life than is counted by our threescore years and ten, but that we live ultimately a different life. The strength of this hope is grounded in the qualitative contrasts far more than in the quantitative extension of life.

Christianity has affirmed in its earliest creed its faith in the "communion of saints." Many proponents of the religion of humanity could subscribe with good conscience to that article of the creed. But in its original setting this phrase suggests a contrast that is not always present in humanism.

These saints to whom we are united in the community of Christian experience are unlike us. They have put off the mortality that is our lot, they are freed from the bonds of our finiteness, they have undergone the universalizing touch of death, they have put on an immortality that makes of them another kind of person. They are loved deeper, darklier understood, and we dream a dream of good as we mingle our world with theirs. Belonging to them gives us something that of ourselves we are not and have not.

We do not deify these saints, we do not canonize them—at least in Protestant circles—but they live in our racial memory and our imagination as intimations of that divine order to which they now belong. They stand, as the Bible says in another connection, "to Godward" for us. Therefore this idea, which

seems at first to require no more than is given in the religions of humanity, implies a prior or an eventual idea of God.

The traditional hymns of heaven and of the saints, while they use much imagery that is difficult if not incredible, succeed in preserving the felt contrast between two worlds. Utopian hymns of the perfected social order on earth, which are content to stimulate the reformer's zeal, lack this note; they have to do with one world only. The curious religious flatness of such hymns must be attributed to their endeavor to make a half truth suffice.

The prospect of belonging to a society of persons surviving for an indefinite time in history and perhaps enduring immortally does not satisfy the religious need if those persons are merely replicas of ourselves. Myself multiplied to the *n*th power is not a religious idea. Religion requires an otherness within the total bundle of life that is not provided by an indeterminate human series struck off from a single mould.

It is difficult to see therefore how the religions of humanity can survive the eventual critical work of their own "Levellers." They

may succeed in vindicating their position, but in so doing they take away from their faith whatever religiousness it may conserve or anticipate.

But if we can keep inviolate the persuasion that the communion of saints is one of the clear intimations of the whole other-worldly aspect of religion, then belonging to this society may be one of the most rewarding and steadying experiences in the religious life. If the human race is going down to corporate defeat in the remorseless operations of the natural order, then belonging to the race is not that overcoming of the world which religion requires. But if we are assured that while we feebly struggle they in glory shine, then belonging to this deathless and victorious society is one of the ways in which we give substance to our faith that we belong to God.

I venture by way of conclusion to these meditations upon a highly controversial matter a parable from life that may intimate the way in which the religion of humanity relates itself fitly to faith in God and serves that faith.

From early childhood until recent years my

summer vacations were spent on the coast of Maine; spent largely in boats, with fishermen, on the sea. The little harbor where we anchored our boats was landlocked on three sides—the north, the south, the west—but was open to the sea on the east. The prevailing summer winds were a gentle northwest breeze at night and a fresh southerly wind during the day. The harbor furnished, therefore, a quiet anchorage under a lee shore from both these winds.

At least once or twice during the summer, however, we had to reckon with an easterly storm. That storm was two or three days in brewing, and in its arrival and aftermath lasted a week. At such a time the wind blew with gale force, and the seas came pounding into our little harbor with the full weight of the North Atlantic behind them. There was no shelter against that storm, and boats lying anchored in the harbor had to take the full shock of the wind and the waves.

Landlubbers who anchored their boats carelessly on those ominously still nights when the storm was brewing usually lost them. The boats dragged anchor and went ashore before

morning, as the bad weather came in with the dawn. The rest of us had learned by long and costly experience what we might expect and planned accordingly.

Every once in four or five years we made a concrete block weighing half a ton, with an eye bolt through it. To this eye bolt we shackled perhaps five fathoms of some old ship's cable. To the end of the cable we shackled six or seven fathoms of heavy rope, an inch thick. The far end of this rope was spliced in an eye to go over the bitts in the bow of the boat. This whole end of the rope was served with canvas so that the rope should not chafe where it went through the chocks, where it passed under a bobstay, or where it was liable to saw against the bow. The mooring block and the chain lasted a number of summers; the rope was renewed each year. In all ordinary weathers this mooring was far more than sufficient. The heavy chain usually lay on bottom, and the boat rode on the rope. If you held the rope in your hand you could sometimes feel the chain lift link by link from the bottom and then drop back.

But we learned by the occasional loss of our

boats that even these precautions were not enough for an easterly storm. During an easterly storm the boat was charging about like a wild animal on a tether, and twenty-four hours of that would saw through the canvas covering and the rope itself. Moreover, the boat was always riding back taut against the mooring block; a sudden heavy wave throwing the boat back sometimes found a weak link in the chain. Occasionally the storm would tear the bitts out of the bow deck of the boat, and she would come ashore leaving the bitts tied to the mooring. There were then two problems to be solved. First you had to stop the boat yawing about and chafing through the mooring line, and then you had to prevent her coming back suddenly upon a taut line when something might break.

These problems we solved in this way: When we knew that an easterly storm was coming up we took a light anchor with a very long rope and carried it forward in a skiff away from our boat. We carried it at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the regular mooring line. Then, when we had paid out the whole length, we pulled the boat forward,

rather up over her own mooring, leaving that mooring a little slack, and having done this we threw the light anchor overboard.

The boat was then riding on two lines, a light line and a heavy line. These lines were arranged so that riding now on a yoke rather than a single line the boat did not yaw about, and so that the lighter line felt the weight of the boat first. You had stopped her charging about and chafing her mooring, you had stopped her coming back suddenly with full weight taut upon one line.

The long light line kept her in position and always bow on to seas, and this line took the shock of the wave first and eased her back onto her heavier mooring. If it was rightly placed this second long light line never failed to do its work and to save you your boat.

It has seemed to me, since, as I have thought over this familiar business so often put through before the storm, that there is in it a parabolic account of the place of humanism in religion. A belief in God, in some form or other, must be the main anchor and mooring of our souls, foursquare, substantial, and calculated to bear the full weight of life. But the

actual fabric of our faith in God may have some unsuspected flaw, and adversity may seek out a weak link in the chain. Moreover, men chafing about in time of trouble have more than once worn out their own patience and have exhausted their power to think and feel with conviction. Sometimes sudden onslaughts of trial seem to tear the very religiousness out of us, leaving a despairing objective intellectual belief in a God still there, but this being a God with whom we no longer have personal connection; and at such times the human stuff of us makes shipwreck.

It is against these emergencies to which every human life is liable that we are not only entitled, but more or less under bonds, to make auxiliary preparation through a reënforcing faith in some human tradition which keeps us headed in the right direction and which takes the first shock of adversity. The ground of religion in every human mind is the conviction, "I belong to God; God is there, God cares." But this conviction is helped to do its work well if it is interpreted by the conviction, "I belong to a succession or society of men. These men have not failed me,

I must not fail them." Both these convictions deal with the same problem in the same way; they propose to save us by identifying us with realities that are grounded in the total scheme of things. If the religions of humanity intimate plainly the divine otherness that religion requires, they preserve that "dissimilitude in similitude," which is necessary to the idea.

We are then, all of us, constantly eased back upon the final saving conviction that God cares by the plain empirical knowledge that other men care. To know yourself as belonging to a human family, to some enduring human society, a church, a college, a state, is to have an experience in which you find the quality of religion. So construed and experienced the religion of humanity is a fortifying and interpreting idea that Christianity must always require.

VI

MYSTICISM

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MYSTICISM

LIFE, for the Christian, is bounded on its eastern and western horizons by two metaphors, that of the Garden of Eden and that of the City of God. Between these extremes lies the whole course of history with the moral vicissitudes of the race.

Whether we call it the state of innocence or the state of nature, we cannot return to the first of these human states. Something, either the tragedy known as sin or the disease called civilization, has taken away man's innocence and his naturalness. The weaving sword, which, according to the book of Genesis, the Lord God put before Eden, turning every way and guarding the way of the tree of life, is a symbol of our inability to recover the past.

"The moving finger writes, and having writ
Moves on, nor all your piety and wit
Can lure it back, to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

The things that belong to our human peace lie therefore in the City of God at the end of the road. But sometimes it seems even more difficult to get into that city than to go back to the garden. For the doors of the city, like the gates of the garden, are guarded by words that gleam as a sword, and are not to be easily passed by.

In particular, Jesus said that whosoever would enter his kingdom must become as a little child. There are few conditions for religion harder to meet than this. The demands imposed by these words would be easier to fulfill if we were clearer what they meant.

In making this definition, we have to draw a fine line between childlikeness and childishness. We cannot dissent from St. Paul's familiar saying that we must put away childish things; at the same time we must keep our childlikeness. Those words about becoming as little children seem simple until you begin to think about them, but when you try to identify precisely the traits of childhood, which Jesus must have intended, the task is strangely hard.

There are two passages in Carlyle's *Sartor*

Resartus, which throw some light on this matter. The first is an apostrophe to childhood in general:

"Happy season of Childhood! Kind Nature, that art to all a bountiful mother; that visitest the poor man's hut with auroral radiance; and for thy Nursling hast provided a soft swathing of Love and infinite Hope, wherein he waxes and slumbers, danced round by sweetest Dreams! If the paternal Cottage still shuts us in, its roof still screens us; with a Father we have as yet, a prophet, priest and king, and an Obedience that makes us free. The young spirit has awakened out of Eternity, and knows not what we mean by Time; as yet Time is no fast hurrying-stream, but a sportful sunlit ocean; years to the child are as ages: ah! the secret of Vicissitude, of that slower or quicker decay and ceaseless downrushing of the universal World-fabric, from the granite mountain to the day-moth, is yet unknown; and in a motionless Universe, we taste, what afterwards in this quick-whirling Universe is forever denied us, the balm of Rest. Sleep on, thou fair Child, for thy long rough journey is at hand!"

The other passage is a description of a recurring experience in Carlyle's own childhood:

"On fine evenings I was wont to carry-forth my supper (bread-crumb boiled in milk), and eat it out-of-doors. On the coping of the Orchard-wall, which I could reach by climbing, or still more easily if Father Andreas would set-up the pruning-ladder, my porringer was placed: there, many a sunset, have I, looking at the distant western Mountains, consumed, not without relish, my evening meal. Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of World's expectation, as Day died, were still a Hebrew speech for me; nevertheless I was looking at the fair illuminated Letters, and had an eye for their gilding."

There is abroad among us to-day an academic interest in that particular type of religious experience known as Mysticism. The first stimulus to this study was given us, just at the beginning of the century, by William James's account of those historic individuals in whom religion burned as an acute fever. This inquiry still goes on.

With many persons, however, this interest is much more than a matter of curious investigation, it is a hunger of the soul. There is a growing conviction that these mystics have in their keeping the secret of the religious life,

and that, if we could once understand them, we might then with profit attempt to imitate them. The difficulty is, as all the mystics themselves have known, that here we are in an area where words either desert us or betray us:

> "For something is too large for sight,
> And something much too plain to say."

Moreover, even if we succeed in deducing some rule for the mystic way, the result seems so obvious that we suspect it.

> "So very simple is the road,
> That we may stray from it."

Now every inquiry into mysticism brings us into the presence of persons whose characters have the baffling simplicity of childhood, and since mysticism is the religion of those who have become as little children, we shall get some understanding of it, if we review those qualities in the nature of the child that Jesus must have had in mind when he first laid on us the injunction to become as little children.

The passages from Carlyle, just quoted,

give us an initial insight. With fine fidelity to fact they fasten upon two striking characteristics of the experience of the child: the timelessness of his world and the wonder with which he looks out upon that world. The same may be said of the mystic. The moments that he seeks and which his whole regimen is intended to insure are those that have about them the quality of eternity. This doctrine of the eternal moment is central with mysticism. It is to be found not merely in the lives of the canonized saints of yesterday: it is a commonplace with the poets and artists of to-day.

One of the nobler volumes that came out of the war is *The Letters of Arthur George Heath*, a fellow of New College, Oxford, who was killed at La Bassée in October, 1915. With the premonition of death upon him he wrote to his mother, not long before the end, a letter, which states very simply this faith of the mystic in the worth of the eternal moment. The language of theology is not used, the spirit of religion is here:

"We make the division between life and death as if it were one of dates—being born at

one date and dying some years after. But just as we sleep half our lives, so when we're awake, too, we know that often we're only half alive. Life, in fact, is a quality rather than a quantity, and there are certain moments of real life whose value seems so great that to measure them by the clock, and find them to have lasted so many hours or minutes, must appear trivial or meaningless. Their power, indeed, is such that we cannot properly tell how long they last, for they can colour all the rest of our lives, and remain a source of strength and joy that you know cannot be exhausted, even though you cannot trace exactly how it works. The first time I ever heard Brahms's Requiem remains with me as an instance of what I mean. Afterwards you do not look back on such events as mere past things whose position in time can be localized; you still feel as living the power that first awoke in them. Now if such moments could be preserved, and the rest strained off, none of us could wish for anything better."

This is a simple account of one of the central doctrines of mysticism, its belief in the present possibility and the permanent worth of what Aristotle calls "the rare best moments" of life. These experiences do not belong in the "fast-

hurrying stream of time"; they belong in the timeless world in which the child lives.

The second of Carlyle's passages touches upon a spiritual quality common also to mystics and children; the capacity for wonder. Religion perhaps would call this capacity, when it is realized, reverence or worship. Let me remind you of the saying of Coleridge's, which was quoted in the first of these chapters, that wonder is the beginning and ending of wisdom; the first wonder being the child of ignorance, the last wonder the parent of adoration.

The mystic is a man who has passed from the first to the second wonder; he has kept in disciplined age this mental habit of his childhood; he has never lost the power to say, "I wonder." But those words, which were first the voice of a childish perplexity, become with the years the witness to his maturest conviction.

We might say, by way of a tentative verdict as to the effect of modern science upon modern religion, that second-rate science has taken away from second-hand religion the power of wonder. With scientists of the first rank, as

with first-hand religious persons, science has increased both the occasion and the capacity for wonder. Those dispositions of the mind, which Christianity celebrates as the virtues of humility and reverence, find much of their nobler expression through the best science of our time. The pure scientists are humble men who have developed, through the disciplines of their study, the human power to wonder. But pure scientists and pure saints are rare creatures in this world; and popularized science, which gives us results only without requiring of us participation in the rigorous methods by which the results were attained, spreads the heresy that science has dispensed with religion. With the spread of the gross error that science has explained all mysteries we lose our humility and cease any longer to wonder at our world.

No one who knows anything of the character of such a man as Charles Darwin can possibly miss there a strong strain of childlikeness, a strain which we identify both as a humble trustfulness of nature and as an unspoiled capacity for wonder. All this is, however, merely one of the hallmarks of mysticism.

If, then, you belong to the company of those who are inclined to think that the mystics have a religious truth, which is worth knowing and keeping, I venture this conclusion to what we have said thus far: Mysticism, whatever else it requires, demands of us childlikeness, in so far as its most characteristic experiences seem to be timeless and are accompanied by wonder. Any regimen which we may propose for ourselves as mystics-in-the-making involves a determination to keep faith with whatever eternal moments life may have given us and to guard the power of wondering, which is common to the child and the saint.

Until last summer this was the best that I was able to do with the attempt to catch the spirit and the intention of those elusive words of Jesus. Then, last summer, I had an experience that seemed to me to throw further light on this matter.

I was spending part of the season on the coast of Ireland with some of my kinsmen, one of whom— a child—I must exploit for the purposes of the argument. We often had occasion

to go down to a little railroad station to take the train to Dublin, or to meet some of the family coming out from town. Much time was spent, therefore, at the station waiting for trains and exploring meanwhile the rather meager attractions of the platform. Among these was a vending machine which, in response to a provocative penny and some subsequent manipulation, would deliver a short strip of aluminum with your name—or any better text you proposed—embossed in the metal.

This machine fascinated the child of whom I speak. He wished to have a number of these strips on which his own name was immortalized, and it was further his benevolent intention to make and get name plates for all his friends. The only difficulty was that which besets most of us from the cradle to the grave, the necessary pennies. It seemed to me plain, as he talked to me of this machine and led me to it again and again, that I was cast for the rôle of a benevolent providence. The conditions were not, after all, impossible, and on a given day we made a joint pilgrimage to the

shrine. I dealt out the pennies, he put them into the machine, punched the letters, and received the resultant miracle.

That hour was worth the pennies to me, a thousand times over. Travelers came and went, porters pushed past with luggage, trains came into the station and went out, there were clatter and confusion everywhere, but nothing diverted this boy. He was utterly unaware of anything and everything that went on around him. He might have been a saint in solitary vigil before an altar. He was not conscious of the crowds or even of me, as I handed him the pennies. And far more moving to me, as I sat and watched him, was his entire unconsciousness of himself, his utter absorbed intentness upon that machine and the business in hand.

It came over me with a wave of regret and resentment that growing up means the loss of just that—the power to be thus unself-conscious as a child. It seemed to me that I would have given half my goods to be for one hour as utterly unaware of self as was that boy. I thought with bitter consent of that couplet of Matthew Arnold's:

"Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be."

That was my condition and the condition of most of the men and women whom I knew.

Then I remembered Wordsworth's defense of fairy stories for children in that passage of the *Prelude* in which the poet is tilting against the pedagogy proposed in Rousseau's *Émile*. Wordsworth dreaded to have children made self-conscious too soon, and envied them their unself-consciousness.

"Oh! give us once again the wishing-cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that he forgets himself."

As I turned back from these reflections to look again at the boy before me it suddenly flashed on me: That! that is what Jesus meant by becoming as a little child—just that; nothing less than that; perhaps no more than that.

Religion proposes to help us find ourselves. This task is not, however, as simple as it

seems. The self with which we are familiar at any given moment is only a prophecy of some larger self that may be. Mysticism holds indeed that there are two selves within us, the one a partial and individual self, the other a whole and universal self. This latter self is the "ground of the soul," the seat and perhaps the substance of the divine that is within. There can be no religion without an awareness of this self, but alone this inner self does not suffice to give us a religion. The dwelling of the divine is certainly "the mind of man," but it is also,

> "The light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky . . .
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought."

Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* opens with just such a majestic account of religion: "Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these two are connected by many ties, it is not easy to

determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other."

Calvin goes on to say that the natural man inclines to strike straight for self-knowledge, since every man is naturally self-centred. He adds, however, that this direct quest for self will fail, since "man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God."

Now the characteristic attitude of the child, which Jesus would have us recover in our maturity, is precisely this initial unself-consciousness in the presence of an outer reality. The child comes at the problem of knowledge and the getting of religion in the right direction; he begins by looking out. Hidden in the Gospel of Luke, for example, is a neglected saying to this effect: "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" These words are true to the whole trend of Jesus' teaching, but they reverse the familiar counsel which we give to our children. We tell them to learn to care for their own things; later they will be allowed to care for the things of others. Jesus says just the op-

posite: Learn to care for what is not your own and what is not yourself, so you shall find yourself and win your own.

Someone has said that children learn to read by using capital letters, and only afterward do they learn to use small letters; so it is with the religious life. We learn our first life lessons in the capital letters of the outer world, and only later do we reread the same texts in the lower case of self-consciousness. Much of the permanent wisdom of living lies in the determination to maintain this needful childlikeness of the spiritual life, with its awareness of the world's capital letters.

It may seem at first glance that at this point the mystics are not childlike. As we read their pages, their whole injunction is to turn inward. They ring the changes on that familiar line in the *Imitation*, "Seek a fit time to retire into thyself." They dwell, with St. Theresa, in "The Interior Castle." They seek, with Tauler, "a quiet solitude in the depths of the heart." Mysticism seems thus to be the consummation of inwardness of life. How can we say that the mystics have the childlike, outward-turned mind?

We can only take them at their own word. The self that they seek and often find, in this still, interior desert place, is not the self that can be found and classified by any of the ordinary methods of self-culture and self-consciousness. Indeed, the moral disciplines of mysticism are intended to deliver us from the self that can be thus known, a fragmentary and ephemeral self, and to open the way to the universal self.

Hence this self-knowledge of theirs is not a process of following the windings of a dark tunnel within until it comes at last to a blind end, where there is some cathedral-like and dimly lighted hollow cavern of selfhood, which is the shrine of God. Their adventure is a much more arduous and thoroughgoing affair than that. They propose, if we may use the homely metaphor, "to dig through to China." This Interior Castle is not a place of solitary confinement; it has a secret passage out into the open. The mystics are trying to find that way out into the open, through this intensest inwardness of life.

But they would never have turned inward if they had not first looked outward. Precisely

because they have seen the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe in the outer order, they seek this same Spirit at the ground of the soul. In so doing they have to rid themselves of all that is most familiarly known as self in order to reach the universal life at the heart and centre of their being. Precisely because the mystics have been faithful in that which is another's they have won finally the right to seek and the power to find that which is most truly their own. The mystics never doubt or deny the existence of God in the world around. On the contrary, because they believe in the God without they turn at last to find the God who is within. That is their mature childlikeness.

There is in Wordsworth a line which says that the spirit of God "knows no insulated spot." Most of the difficulties of contemporary religion arise from the tendency to insulate this spirit in the soul of man and thus to interrupt the commerce between the world within and the world without. There are in the Bible two injunctions: one to the effect that we should "keep our hearts with all diligence," the other that we should "seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion." The attempt to

insulate the heart so that it shall be immune from the sweet influences of the Pleiades and Orion is fatal to religion.

Perhaps the truer word would be "isolate." For the inner world is not so much insulated against the world without as isolated from it. Graver than all perplexities as to virgin births, bodily resurrections, and miracles is this perplexity that arises in the modern mind as our knowledge of the unfolding universe around parts company with our knowledge of the mind within. These two worlds are now much farther apart than they have ever been before.

It is a slack day in the observatories of the modern world when astronomers do not add more thousands of light years to the dimensions of the universe. Only a few short years ago we had adjusted our minds to the proposition that the universe was two hundred thousand light years in diameter. Now we are told that it is probably a million light years in diameter.

So also it is a dull day in the laboratory when some psychologist does not go down deeper into the unconscious than anyone has ever

gone before. The newer psychologists are like divers with an apparatus that is being continually improved, thus enabling them to go farther down into the mind of man than their predecessors dreamed of going. We all know what monsters they see down there, and what curious things they bring to the surface when they come up.

If you wish to get the contemporary problem of religion stated in untheological terms, read first some textbook on the newer psychology and then the latest publication on the discoveries in astronomy. Attempt, then, to get the two worlds thus envisaged into some connection, and you will understand why religion is not as easy for us as it seems to have been for our predecessors.

To make the journey between these extremes costs much time and intellectual trouble. It is, indeed, so costly that we cannot make it often, with fixed abodes at each end. A good friend of mine talking the other day about a kinswoman who had just died said quite naïvely, "This is her first Sunday in heaven." The words startled me by their simplicity. I like to think that I share with

my friend the conviction that the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and that I can say with confidence, "The spirit shall return to God who gave." But when I speak of this mysterious commerce between the worlds, I should not naturally say of one of these pilgrims, "This is her first Sunday in heaven." There are some journeys which we must take so long that whether we like it or not we have to travel on Sunday!

Things have come therefore to this pass with us, that men cannot spend their threescore years and ten coming and going between these worlds, the world within and the world without. It takes all of a man's time to begin to know a little something about one of them. We are content if the astronomer tells us about the heavens and do not require him to guide us into the depths of the unconscious human mind. We do not require the psychologist to be also an astronomer; we are satisfied that he tells us what he knows of his own subject.

But the moment of danger, for religion, is the moment when these worlds get so far apart that the universal spirit fails to leap the gap. And if we have to choose between worlds

that have lost touch with each other we are no better off in the world within than we might have been in the world without. For

> "If the mind turn inward, she recoils
> At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—
> Lost in a gloom of uninspired research;
> Meanwhile the heart within the heart, the seat
> Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,
> On its own axis restlessly revolving,
> Seeks, yet can nowhere find, the light of truth."

These lines from *The Excursion* are an accurate description of much of the "religious consciousness" of the present day. This latest religious dilemma is due, in part, to our willingness to allow psychology to assume the whole task of interpreting and vindicating the religious life.

This science has done us great service in the immediate past. It has helped us to understand how men get religion and what religion does with them and for them. But in so far as psychology aspires to be, and in some measure succeeds in becoming, an exact science, it cannot and may not concern itself with the nature of the outer world. Psychology is prohibited

from asking whether the stimulus to which the human creature reacts is bread or stone; its primary concern is with the behavior of man. Meanwhile, religion cannot cease asking whether the outer world is bread or stone, since the life of the soul depends upon its ability to distinguish between the two and to choose accordingly.

Every generation seems to cherish the delusion that there must be in the realm of ultimately accessible truth some secret chamber which contains the knowledge that will explain all mysteries. This strange delusion seems to-day to accompany much of the trust vested in psychology and even to attend certain of the claims of that science. The psychologist is the man who has the key and is to unlock the door of this hidden place.

We do not question for a moment the right and the duty of the psychologist to explore that area of knowledge assigned to him in the division of modern intellectual labor. We only say that what he finds and knows is not of itself sufficient for religion. If he attempts to usurp the ancient theological purple of "the queen of the sciences" we can only say that it

is the part of common sense to scrutinize his claim to the succession.

The temptation to put our religious all in his keeping has its origins in our perplexities and perhaps our skepticism as to the divine nature of the outer universe. We appealed to him in the first instance because the astronomer told us that he had swept the heavens with his telescope and could find no God. But it will prove quite as true, in the end, that the psychologist has searched the human spirit with his microscope and has found no God. To find God you must look both ways. And if much experience in these matters over many generations has any pertinence to-day, we can only say that we are to look inward after we have looked outward.

Let us hear the conclusion to the whole matter, in so far as it concerns the religious condition of liberal Protestantism. Most of us know more about ourselves than we know about the environing universe. The whole tendency of the age is to make us self-conscious and to a degree self-sufficient.

In particular the burden of theological proof now thrown upon psychology restricts

us far too rigidly to one world. The partner whom it contemplates is the lesser of the two partners to the "eternal contract between the worlds." Most of us need badly the corrective of an outward turned mind. The time has not yet come, probably, when we can attempt to formulate that dreamed-of ideal, "the new theology." There will have to be much more patient and persistent travel between the poles of our self-knowledge and our knowledge of environing nature and history before we shall be in a position to understand the interrelation of these extremes and so to draft the new theology.

But most persons of our kind ought to go more constantly abroad into the universe, to be delivered from the debilitating effects of too much preoccupation with themselves. Precisely because we know more about what goes on within us than about what is going on around us, the law of alternation, with its permanent wisdom, suggests the timeliness of the outward turned mind.

Among the parables of Jesus there is one which our age is neglecting—the parable of the seed growing secretly. It is a warning

against impatience. It is also a warning against too anxious self-consciousness, a brief for childlikeness of character and life.

There was a time when Carlyle said, "Close thy *Byron;* open thy *Goethe.*" In that same spirit one might say to-day, "Close your *Freud* and open your *Eddington.*" Not because Freud is untrue, but because for religion his truth will prove in the end to be a sterile half truth unless it is corrected by a mind turned in the other direction.

If psychology attempts to vindicate religion in the terms of its own half truth it must become in the end an apologist for poses. In the nature of the case psychology cannot be the interpreter of attitudes, since it must be indifferent to outer reality when engaged upon its own distinctive inquiries.

Hence, in the getting of religion to-day, the need of the help of those dispassionate natural sciences that require of us attitudes toward our universe. These attitudes are essentially religious, and we have quite as much to learn about the method of the religious life from the attitudes of the natural sciences as from the findings of the psychological and social sciences.

We return, therefore, to our point of initial departure. Religion is not a pose; it is an attitude. Its attitudes are those of the child and the mystic. I can only hint at them in conclusion.

The first attitude is that of wonder. No man will ever be religious who has spoiled his capacity for wonder. No man to whom the mysteries of his own nature and of environing nature have become tedious commonplaces or trite facts will ever enter the Kingdom of Heaven. If we lose the capacity for wonder we cease to be able to worship, and worship is the beginning and ending of religion from which all else flows as consequence and corollary.

The second attitude is that of trust. Religion requires at the last a willingness to commend ourselves to an immaterial reality. Religion is the courage to let yourself go in this element which seems so unsubstantial, but which so many men have found to be so real, to be indeed the only reality.

"As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:

I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies."

The third attitude is that of humility, the peculiar excellence of the child and the mystic. Humility is not thinking meanly of yourself, it is thinking so intently of something infinitely greater and more satisfying than self that you never think of yourself at all, or think of yourself for a moment only, to know that, having lost one self, you have found the other self.

These attitudes—to which others may be added—are the ground of a religious character and the method of the religious life. Where man stands in the attitude of wonder, trust, and humility in the presence of his universe, there is the substance of all his latent religion and the promise of his mature religion. In an age which has for us all many religious perplexities, it is more important that we should discipline ourselves in these attitudes than that we should define too hastily all that they may imply.

We are living at a time when we seem to be

on the verge of discovering new and greater truths about God. It is too brave and bright a dawn to spend "rotting away in the isolated dungeon of our self-consciousness."

"For while the tired waves vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

"And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright."

THE END

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Signs of these times.

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